96

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NEW GLADIATOR RULES IN DRAGON® MAGAZINE

DUNGEON • PANDEMONIUM IN THE VEINS • BEYOND THE LIGHT OF REASON • GENETECH • DELTA GREEN JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2003

Dungeon®

January/February 2003
Vol. XVI, No. 6 Issue #96

EDITORIAL 6

LETTERS 8

CRITICAL THREATS: COLD STORAGE 12
DUNGEON Staff
This icy chamber will chill your PCs to the bone. A D&D "Critical Threat."

HOLLOW THREATS 14
Richard L.J. Pett
A dragon turtle is headed the PCs' direction, having terrorized towns up and down the coast. Is the small fishing hamlet of Fogly next on its menu? A D&D Side Trek for 1st-level characters.

PROVINCIAL PRIOR CAUSE 20
Johnny L. Wilson
Cultists of Gruumsh have subverted one of the Soldiers of the Sun, and the PCs must track the traitor down. A D&D adventure for 1st-level characters.

PANDEMONIUM IN THE VEINS 30
Frank Brunner
Life as a gladiator is deadly enough inside the arena. So it's just unfair when something starts killing the prize fighters outside their matches. It's up to the PCs to go undercover as gladiators themselves and solve the mysterious deaths. "Pandemonium in the Veins" can be used with "Campaign Components: Gladiators" in *DRAGON Magazine* #303 for extensive gladiatorial mayhem, or played alone. A D&D adventure for 5th-level characters.

BEYOND THE LIGHT OF REASON 64
Caine Chandler
The town of Rutherton has lived in peace for years thanks to the protective flame of the *light of reason*. When the flame is extinguished, the PCs must race against time to re-light it or the town will be destroyed. A D&D adventure for 13th-level characters.

Romeo.
Courage, man; the hurt cannot be much.

Mercutio.
No, 'tis not so deep as a well, nor so wide as a church door; but 'tis enough, 'twill serve: ask for me to-morrow, and you shall find me a grave man. I am peppered, I warrant, for this world.—A plague o' both your houses!

—William Shakespeare
Romeo and Juliet. Act III, Scene i

COVER

Marc Sasso shows us Volpone Venazzi, a gladiator from "Pandemonium in the Veins," standing ready to face any who would challenge his title of arena champion.

YOU CAN LEAD A HORSE TO WATER

I'm a pretty lucky fella. I get to play in Chris Perkins's Wednesday night Arveniar campaign, I have the opportunity to enjoy Matt Sernett's Oriental Adventures office game, and I'm forced to endure—that is, I am privileged to be a part of—Jesse Decker's office gladiator campaign. But the joy of my gaming existence, the apple of my devilish eye, is the Sunday game I run at home.

Like most players, I long envied the power of the screen jockey, the uber-mighty DM. I ran the occasional game, to be sure, but not until 3rd Edition launched was I able to coerce a few of my gaming compadres to join me in exploring the possibilities of the new system. I began with six players, promptly drove half of them away, gained a few more, lost a couple, and finally, two years later, settled in with a solid group of loyal, hale, slightly off balance, and remarkably juvenile (like DM, like player, so they say) group of five willing to deal with my idiosyncrasies.

We play roughly every two weeks, but frequently my players get scarce for some reason. I've yet to find a pattern to their disappearances, but I'm sure I have nothing to do with it. Anyway, the sporadic nature of our sessions leads to some difficulties in campaign continuity. In a weekly game, it's easier for the players to stay focused and keep track of a campaign's inner workings since fewer days pass between sessions. The same isn't true of less regular session, which is the conundrum I want to address here.

Often, when my players sit down for a new session, I have to spend the first half hour reminding them what happened in the previous game. I often layer plots together with intertwining themes and intersecting story threads. It all works in my head (that might actually be most of the problem), but when I make a grand revelation concerning said twists, I'm met with blank stares and slack jaws as often as not (Sernett, one of the players, is working on the jaw thing, and I'm patient about the drool).

How frustrating! Here I've onioned together a plot of near Shakespearean complexity, but all for nothing. The plans of last month's villains reach out to touch the lives of the PCs in this week's session. The "randomly" dropped item of no discernible value suddenly turns out to be the key to a puzzle on the other side of the world. The petty evil-doers' goals are revealed as part of a larger conspiracy that could destroy reality. And they never make the connections. All this work wasted! But should it be?

I realized something early on in my campaign, when we first had to cancel a game session due to a lack of attendance: It wasn't up to my players to remember all the tiny details of the ongoing plots in the campaign; it was up to me to be sure the details remained memorable. Failing that, I needed to provide them with some way to retain the information I fed them, some way they could occasionally be given some sort of direction in the crazy morass of plots I threw at them each week.

Enter the Dungeon Master—you know, that little, bald freak with the creepy voice from the D&D cartoon who made a spot appearance in each episode to tell the kids where they next needed to go. Okay, in my head, I actually first thought of Gandalf, but the role is the same. I needed some figure of authority within the campaign who could show up, lay out the cards for the characters, intimate that he's much tougher than they are and knows what he's talking about (PCs respect nothing more than a show of chutzpah), then disappear. I needed the Dungeon Master.

What my players got was Chogrin Flagonbearer, a dirty, foul-mouthed dwarf with a magic mug who claims to serve the forces of light. He doesn't need to appear all *that* often—my players are pretty sharp (for mere players, of course). But when they start to look really lost, Chogrin or one of his emissaries shows up, straightens out any confusion that has arisen due to a lack of gaming time, then disappears. It's worked marvelously well.

I know lots of our fearless readers out there must have similar gaming schedules. How do you deal with lapses in player attention span? Send me a letter at **dungeon@paizopublishing.com** and let me know. I could use the help!

Chris

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LETTERS

Tell us what you think of this issue. Write to:
Letters, *Dungeon Magazine*, 3245 146th Place SE, Suite 110,
Bellevue, WA 98007 or send an email to dungeon@paizopublishing.com.

CLARITY AND A WISH FULFILLED

Okay, it surprised me that you published my letter. Anyhow, you said that you wanted me to explain what I meant by tactical maps. I meant dungeon tiles, or floorplan maps of rooms or encounter areas that can be used as combat mats. This type of map was featured in the entry series of modules as well as *The Rod of Seven Parts* and *The Gates of Firestorm Peak*. These could be poster inserts or website downloads. This might be as easy as enlarging the maps in the module and releasing them in a 1 inch = 5 foot scale, probably one room per printable page.

Let me know if you have any other questions

Ted Albert
Via Email

Once again, our prescient cyborgs in the basement have granted a request before it can be sent in. Check out this issue's super-cool battle-map, intended for use with "Pandemonium in the Veins," as well as the companion map in Dragon Magazine #303. They serve all your gladiatorial combat needs.

CORRECTION AND CLARIFICATION

I just received Dungeon #95 in place of my two-year subscription of *Star Wars Gamer* and found nothing in it about Star Wars. The letter I got from the publishing company wrote that the game content of *Gamer* would be in Dungeon and that fiction would appear in *Star Wars Insider*. This is the third month and I've seen no information on Star Wars; what's up?

I'm not putting Dungeon down; I like it just as much as *Gamer*. Now I have to have to go out and buy some of the back issues of Dungeon. Oh, and I did not see anything in Dungeon #95 that I could order back issues from.

I was reading the "Letters" section and was very happy to read about Gamma World d20 until I tried **www.gammaworld20.com**. It was wrong, though—you need to add another "d" to the address to get there: **www.gammaworldd20.com**.

Wes Young II
Hopewell, VA

It takes time for these things to fall together. Polyhedron editor Erik Mona has been working with Lucasfilm to get some Star Wars content in the magazine; you'll probably see something in issue #97. This is new ground for our staff, though, so be patient. And thanks for pointing out the Web address error. For those who missed the subtle difference, the correct address is: www.gammaworldd20.com (two ds).

WE'RE CONFUSED

I have never subscribed to Dungeon even though I live seventy miles from the nearest store that carries it. I have, however, been a faithful reader of the magazine since issue #6 (July/August, 1987). In fact, I'm looking at it right now. To summarize, there are six excellent adventures for characters ranging from levels 4–12. There is little else, so I have tried to grow as Dungeon does. The additions of sections like "Critical Threats" and "Side Treks" were welcome, but Polyhedron . . . well, I was uncertain, although the cover made it pretty obvious what lay within. I kept hoping though, and each issue I would read through Polyhedron. I hated every one, but I figured it was free, so it wasn't a problem. Now it's a problem, as I am paying an extra $2.00 an issue for something I don't use. Reader Calinda Lucas tried to tell you this in issue #95, but you discounted the opinion as silly.

True, Lucas had never read Polyhedron, but as I said, the cover is all one needs to see to know if it's something they'll enjoy.

Like it or not, Polyhedron and Dungeon have two different audiences, and I now resent having to pay for both. The reason I never subscribed is because I want the magazine on as many store shelves as I can get it (I purchased #95 in a bookstore that had never carried it until I requested they do so). I don't expect a price reduction, but I do expect something more for my money (issue #95 has only three adventures, discounting "Porphyry House Horror" due to its mature rating). Dungeon readers carry the magazine, and as your primary subscribers, you need to stop dismissing our criticisms and start doing something before you start losing those of us who have been patient through this transition period.

In the coming few months I'll keep buying and hoping, but if this isn't addressed soon, I won't be with you much longer.

John Daily
Via Email

We never dismissed Calinda's opinion. But we do respectfully disagree that you can dismiss Polyhedron, or anything for that matter, without actually taking it for a test spin. The point we tried to make in our response is that Polyhedron might very well be worth the cover price to you; you never actually know until you give it a look. We strongly believe that you can't judge a book by its cover, to use the old cliché, and that there is something in nearly every Polyhedron for any D&D player. Our reader response has been nearly overwhelmingly positive regarding the flippy magazine; we regret the price increase, but having explored the other options, none of the others made the magazine healthy. And once more for the cheap seats: Neither Polyhedron nor Dungeon was doing well on its own, but together they have a chance at suc-

cess.

As for the number of adventures per issue, we've been printing fewer in each issue because, due to the demand of our readers, we've been printing longer adventures. While "Side Treks" and other short adventures remain popular, the vast bulk of our readers cry out for longer, juicier adventures, so we've obliged them with modules like this month's "Pandemonium in the Veins" and "Beyond the Light of Reason." But the page count of the magazine is actually higher than it was with issue #6, and we now fit more words per page, so the amount of adventure content has only grown over the years.

JUICY VILENESS

Wow, where do I start? This is my first time writing a letter to DUNGEON *Magazine*. I've been a subscriber for a couple years now and enjoy reading it from cover to cover—well I used to enjoy reading it when POLYHEDRON wasn't attached. But that's another story.

I'm writing to you about issue #95. All the adventures were quite good and interesting, especially "Porphyry House Horror." Let's see, we have demon worship, prostitution, interspecies relationships, magic narcotics, evil tattoos, necrophiliacs, cannibalistic monks, a masochistic ogre, and exotic and erotic spells and weapons . . . and I thought you guys were getting soft? Keep up the good work!

My favorite adventure so far, though, has been "The Harrowing" from issue #84.

I have a question: With the release of *City of the Spider Queen* will the drow be showing up in any future issues? Also, I really enjoy "Critical Threats."

Dave Howe
Via Email

"Spiral of Manzessine" from issue #94 easily tied in with City of the Spider Queen, *but it intentionally didn't feature drow so DMs and players alike wouldn't experience dark elf overload. Now that you mention it, we haven't had a good drow adventure in some time. We'll need to look into that . . .*

PERDIDO ME

I just wanted to voice my support for Erik Mona's plea for an RPG based on Mieville's *Perdido Street Station*, and would like to strongly recommend the book as an innovative, fresh, and well-written novel.

Gamers might especially be amused by the description of adventurers:

"They were immediately and absolutely recognizable as adventurers . . . They were hardy and dangerous, lawless, stripped of allegiance or morality, living off their wits, stealing and killing, hiring themselves out to whoever and whatever came. They were inspired by dubious virtues.

"A few performed useful services: research, cartography and the like. Most were nothing but tomb raiders. They were scum who died violent deaths, hanging on to a certain cachet among the impressionable through their undeniable bravery and their occasionally impressive exploits."

I cannot recommend this book any more highly.

Stephen Gryphon
RPGA #290016

NOT KID FRIENDLY

The sealed section of issue #95 was interesting, but please don't do it again. I have two problems with this kind of content: First, I like to use DUNGEONS & DRAGONS as a tool to get my six-year-old son excited about learning how to read, doing math, and solving problems, and it works like a charm. So, out of all of the volumes of gaming material I own, and fifteen some years of DUNGEON *Magazine*, issue #95 is the only thing I won't be able to share with him. Second, I use DUNGEONS & DRAGONS as an escape from grim reality. I really don't want it to be a mirror of the same things the media bombards me with every day. I think there's enough graphic content in our world already.

Please let those people who want to play evil, in all it's glory, go out and buy the *Book of Vile Darkness*. I bet they'll be able to come up with their own adventures, and I'm sure they'll be just as depraved, if not more, than Monte Cook or James Jacobs. Personally I want to keep my escape from reality just that: an escape from reality.

Joel Rodda
Tacoma, WA

First of all, we knew going in that the sealed section wasn't for our younger (below 18) audience. But our research indicates that the number of our readers in that age category is incredibly small. That doesn't mean we want to discount those young D&D pioneers. However, we do want to present content that appeals to the largest portion of our readership possible—that's how you sell magazines. We don't have more sealed or mature sections on the agenda right now; the verdict on the issue has by no means been decisive, but we're still waiting for more feedback. If you want to chime in, send an email to **dungeon@wizards.com**.

VILE IT UP

Great job on the latest issue, folks. The adventures were interesting and well-written with very enjoyable adversaries. I especially enjoyed the expandable adventure ideas that are included in all the adventures but left to individual groups to develop fully. Keep doing that—it's a way to remind us players you authors aren't the only ones with creativity out there.

I enjoyed the "Critical Threats" once again. Both these adversaries should prove interesting opponents should our DM use them, and I can hardly wait to foil whatever foul schemes they might try—neither can the rest of the party.

To the writer of *Nodwick:* My loving wife says to tell you: "Be aware that you have exposed something man was not meant to know. Despite the fact that you have done it in the wonderfully hilarious manner in which you usually write cartoons, the deed must still be punished. As you will soon be aware, the elder gods have nothing on us." I swear, sometimes I have no idea what she's talking about.

One more thing: I'd like to thank James Jacobs, Beet, Jonathan Wayshak, Lee Ballard, Christopher West, and whoever else worked with them on "Porphyry House Horror." Thank you for creating such a disturbing adventure. It is so

vile that I trembled and gasped frequently while reading it, and yet at the same time your creation of Scuttlecove has done two very good things.

First, it has made me feel better about my work environment. I'm the head security guard at a decaying, low-income, inner city, riverside apartment complex that was, until recently, overrun with drunks, gang members, vandals, a professional car burglar, a greedy crooked manager, lazy bums, scam artists, and other assorted lowlife villains who I enjoy vanquishing on a daily basis. Many of said villains have recently been vanquished for good (hopefully) in part thanks to my own dedicated hard work, but they did leave a lot of physical and emotional damage in their wake that is only just beginning to be repaired and can never be forgotten. Let's just say I am glad to know someone can conceive of a worse place than where I work!

Second, the mostly lawful and neutral good adventuring party I game with now has a place where we can exert the impulses for mindless slaughter and destruction we indulge in without fear of our DM forcing an alignment change on any of us. Now if I can just convince him to import the place into the campaign and send us there to wreak havoc . . . Wish me luck, okay?

Doug Elder
Austin, TX

Thanks for the feedback. Speaking of Nodwick, *Aaron Williams was married while we wrapped up this very issue. Congratulations, Aaron!*

UN-SEAL-ME

First of all, thanks for a good magazine.

This month I felt compelled to provide some feedback on the structure of the issue. No more sealed sections please. Apparently they increase your publishing costs. In addition, people do not like to cut their magazines open to read them. I have seen many complaints on message boards from people saying their magazines were ruined during this delicate operation.

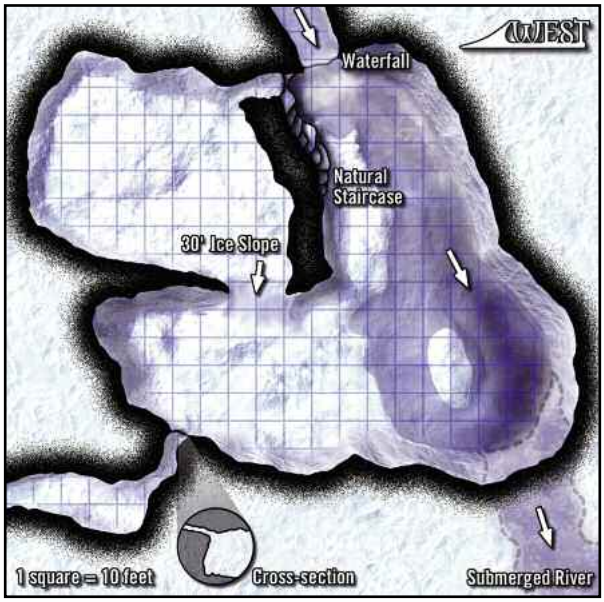
Secondly, I greatly appreciate the reproduction of the cover art on the inside of the magazine. However, please do not print it twice! Issue #95 reprinted the cover art on page 6 and on page 20. That space could be used for a longer adventure.

Jason Ward
Centennial, CO

If we didn't reprint the cover art facing the "Table of Contents," you'd just get another ad since we can't print a one-page adventure, and front matter is no place for a "Critical Threat."

CRITICAL THREATS

BY DUNGEON STAFF
CARTOGRAPHY BY CHRISTOPHER WEST



COLD STORAGE

The cold is unbearable. Although you thought your journey to this chamber was difficult, nothing prepared you for the sight of your own breath crystallizing before your face, and the oppressively frigid air that burns your lungs with each breath.

The chamber beyond the narrow tunnel in which you stand open into a massive cavern. The floor of your small passage drops precipitously a full 50 feet to the icy floor below, while the ceiling barely rises from its current height—just a few feet overhead in the tunnel. Nearly 60 feet away, however, an icy slope rises 30 feet into what appears to be a second chamber beyond the first.

To the east, a sluggishly moving river choked with large and small chunks of ice drifts into a low cave mouth. You can hear the sounds of splashing water—perhaps rapids or a waterfall—out of sight to the northeast.

The ice walls, floor, and ceiling glow with a pale blue light from some source beyond this chamber, creating pools of shadow throughout the cavern. Sadly, the luminescence brings no warmth.

TACTICS

The Cold Storage chamber works as an excellent point to stage tough encounters against creatures accustomed to fighting in the cold. The lighting conditions as described are eminently suitable for those of a roguish persuasion, and you can always alter them as you see fit. The two chambers in the room enable villains to engage in running battles against the PCs, and the freezing river presents a difficult obstacle for characters, especially if the foe has both cold immunity and a swim speed.

The southern room's ceiling ranges from 55–60 feet overhead, as does the ceiling over the river. The northwest chamber's ceiling is only 30 feet high.

The rushing water can be a significant threat in the adventure. The noise can conceal the movement of stealthy opponents moving into position to ambush the characters. Characters who fall in must not only deal with the danger of drowning (*Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 85) and being swept away (the river moves at 30 feet per round) but also with extreme cold (*Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 86). The river might also be totally frozen over with a 2- or 3-inch-thick layer of ice (hardness 0, 3 hit points per inch) that breaks when exposed to 50 pounds of weight or more. When the ice then refreezes within 1 round, PCs who fall in must break a new hole in the ice before resurfacing to catch a breath of air.

The icy floors might be covered with a layer of rough frost that enables characters to keep their footing without a problem. Alternatively, the ice might be extraordinarily slippery, requiring characters to make Balance checks (DC 12) or fall prone. Checks near the water are even more difficult (DC 17) due to moisture from the river. If you're especially devious, you might add a slight grade to the floor toward the water. PCs who fail their Balance checks and fall prone then begin to slide at a rate of 10 feet per round toward the water.

DEVELOPMENT

A group of half-water elemental (see the *Manual of the Planes*)/half-frost giants claims the Cold Storage as their lair high on some mountain peak. The giants come and go via a secret tunnel behind the waterfall, unaware of the small tunnel in the southwest that is covered by a thin layer of ice and frost. The leader of the giants, a fighter/cleric of Thrym named Rousikache, has found clues to an artifact capable of pushing the mountain snowline into the soft, fertile foothills below. Such a plan would devastate the towns that rely on the rich farmlands in these hills, killing numerous inhabitants in the process.

An old white dragon named Hezziurithues has been breeding a pack of half-white dragon/half-frost worm pets in the Cold Storage. Hezziurithues's plan is to take his offspring—full-blooded dragons and half-breeds alike—out of the cave and up onto the tundra proper to wage war against the tribes of northmen, giants, and other arctic denizens that live there.

Long ago, a group of renegade devas known as the Word of Law allied themselves with a group of devils to banish all the demons in the Abyss to another inhabited plane—a plot that would result in the utter annihilation of that plane's residents. Discovered by the rest of heaven before they could complete their plan, the devils were destroyed and the devas banished to an eternity of purgatory, frozen within a massive glacier on the Prime Material Plane. They have been locked in the ice of the Cold Storage for centuries now, but when the bold PCs enter the chamber, they unwittingly trigger a series of magical glyphs planted by a secret ally of the Word of Law when the rebels were first imprisoned. These wards were designed to thaw the ice entrapping the celestials; soon these devas will be free to pursue their dark plan once more. Ω

HOLLOW THREATS

BY RICHARD L.J. PETT

ARTWORK BY LARRY MACDOUGAL

Magic Items Monsters NPCs Objects Settlements Traps

"Hollow Threats" is a D&D Side Trek adventure suitable for four 1st-level PCs, but it can be modified for parties of different levels as noted in the "Scaling the Adventure" sidebar. It takes place on any saltwater coastal region and can easily be dropped into an existing campaign.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The PCs arrive at a coastal hamlet and hear a halfling merchant, Grubby Stinkhorn, tell the tale of a terrible dragon turtle menacing the nearby coast. Strangely, the merchant seems to care little about the goods he carries, nor anything of their value; he is much more interested in finding out about the strengths and abilities of the PCs. The actual menace is nothing more than a small family of orcs who have made a boat out of a dragon turtle shell they found; Grubby acts as their spy.

The evening wears on, and Grubby becomes very friendly with the PCs, whom he plies copiously with drink in the hope of dulling their skills for the morning after.

At dawn, the dragon turtle slips through the mist and its crew debarks to attack the town.

BACKGROUND

Gruntruff Slaphead ruled his orc tribe with a rod of iron, and woe betide any orc who mentioned his wig.

Bogbad was a lowly orc warrior in his tribe, strange in that he had a wife—Breedbound Fellface, who in truth wore the trousers in the family. She gave him four fine sons and countless scars over their years together, and as he entered orc old age, Bogbad hoped that one of his sons would be kind enough to poison him in his sleep. All this changed when Bogbad, on rug cleaning duty in his chief's bedchamber, accidentally set fire to Gruntruff's wig.

Fearing the worst, Bogbad decided to flee but was spotted packing his belongings by his wife. She insisted that she and the boys come along rather than stay at home and be punished in Bogbad's place.

As the sun rose, the orcs sought a place to hide. In the sunlight their eyes couldn't make out much, but they found what they thought was a boat, hidden in the marshes. Hardly able to believe their luck they cast off, paying little heed to the huge bones within. Exhausted from their flight, they fell into a deep sleep

The orcs awoke to discover that the boat had drifted into a town—doubtless crawling with orc-hunting humans. However, as the orcs peered out in fear, they noticed that the town appeared totally empty. Swimming to shore they discovered the town seemed suddenly deserted—meals lay on plates and shop doors were thrown wide open. Bogbad then looked back to sea and noticed the "boat" the family had stowed away on was actually the shell of a dragon turtle. It didn't take a great leap of logic to surmise that the townsfolk, upon seeing the "beast" enter the harbor, must have fled.

The orcs then embarked on a campaign of piracy using their new vessel, sailing into settlements at dawn and watching the villagers flee, even perfecting their plan by making semi-realistic dragon turtle growls through megaphones they found in a village. They also made the shell a moveable wooden head.

Shortly thereafter, they had their second piece of luck. Entering a small village, they stumbled upon a halfling named Grubby Stinkhorn hiding from the terrible beast. Grubby managed to convince the orcs that he could be useful, scouting ahead, checking out places to be raided, and ensuring everyone knew about the terrifying dragon turtle so the band could be sure that everyone had vacated the area.

FOR THE DM

The PCs arrive at the coastal hamlet of Fogly during the late afternoon. The place is probably little more than a stop on the trail, perhaps to some further adventure.

Grubby arrived just before the PCs, and after meeting them, the halfling attempts to assess the PCs' strengths. He notes the group as the hamlet's only real defense. Later, Grubby sneaks out to pass this information to his orc accomplices.

Remember that Grubby is in the village to ensure that the place is easy to attack. He does not want a fight. If attacked, he attempts to flee. The scoundrel has little loyalty to the orcs and will not risk himself to help or warn them. For their part, the orcs do not recognize Grubby as an individual—just a little man who dresses flamboyantly. Should the PCs track Grubby to the ship on one of his excursions to its hiding place, they could easily fool the orcs later by impersonating him.

FOGLY

Fogly (Small Hamlet): Standard; AL NG; 250 gp limit; Assets 2,500 gp; Population 85; Mixed (human 79%, gnome 10%, halfling 8%, half-elf 3%).

Authority Figures: Polliducius Morningwhistle, fisherman and town council chair, male gnome Com3; Yari Reefseeker, fisherwoman and town council member, female human Com2; Wallice Ollingrot, shipwright and town council member, male human Exp2.

Other Notable Figures: Tubby Tubwide, landlord, male human Com2.

Famous for its sea mists, Fogly is a populated largely by fishermen. A dozen hovels cluster around the harbor, and a dozen fishing vessels sit drawn up to a pair of 30-foot-long timber piers. A large whitewashed tavern, The Speckled Cockatrice, sits at the center of the village. Run by Tubby Tubwide, the inn is poor and unremarkable. The villagers lead quiet, unassuming lives.

MEETING GRUBBY

Grubby, Male Halfling Rog1: CR 1; Small Humanoid (2 ft. 11 in. tall); HD 1d6+1; hp 7; Init +7; Spd 20 ft.; AC 16, touch 14, flat-footed 13; Atk +1 melee (1d4/crit ×3, punching dagger) or +3 ranged (1d8/crit 19–20, light crossbow); AL NE; SV Fort +1, Ref +5, Will +1; Str 11, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 12.

Skills: Bluff +5, Climb +1, Craft (trapmaking) +4, Hide +11, Intimidate +5, Listen +3, Move Silently +7, Search +2, Spot +5, Tumble +6. *Feats:* Improved Initiative.

Possessions: masterwork leather armor, punching dagger, light crossbow with 20 bolts, pack (see below), courtiers outfit, pouch containing 20 gp and 15 sp.

Grubby dresses in flashy, bright garments; he smiles constantly and is very talkative. He claims to be

traveling the area dealing in rare and exotic goods; in reality, the goods he carries are plunder from the last village raided by Bogbad's crew. He keeps this loot in a pack in his room at the tavern (see below).

Tactics: Grubby is interested in a safe and easy job; on first meeting the PCs he goes out of his way to be friendly. Anyone who makes a successful opposed Sense Motive check (versus Grubby's Bluff check) realizes the halfling isn't totally sincere in his overtures. He buys all the locals (and the PCs) drinks and continues to do so all day, Bluffing to make it seem that he drinks as much as everyone else. In reality, Grubby drinks very little. Later, he attempts to sell his goods to the PCs, although he has absolutely no idea of their value and haggles solely based on the PCs' first offer (assuming it is not ludicrous).

During the afternoon, Grubby tries to assess the relative strengths and weaknesses of the PCs, paying particular heed to those characters carrying ranged weapons and any spellcasters.

Trap (EL 2): Grubby's room is unlocked, but Grubby sets a a trap in his pack whenever he isn't in the room. A pair of wires release a crossbow bolt from out of the pack at the thief who fails to first find and disarm the trap.

Bolt Trap: CR 2; +12 ranged (1d10/crit 19–20); Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 20).

Treasure: Within the pack, Grubby keeps three *potions of bull's strength*, a set of thieves' tools, a pair of tapestries depicting hunting scenes (100 gp each), a pair of silver candlesticks adorned with symbols of Heironeous (50 gp each), a masterwork lute, and six flasks of holy water.

THE SETUP

Early in the evening, Grubby tells the following tale about his recent visit to a nearby hamlet just up the coast. Read or paraphrase the story as you see fit:

> It came into the bay at dawn, a great foul green thing, bigger than a church, I'd say, and wider than a village green. Its head was the size of a horse, with great teeth that dripped venom and jaws that gouted flame. The brave guards put up a fight, but what chance did they have? Only forty of them guarded the town; it squashed or ate them all. Only the ones who fled survived.

Characters can make bardic knowledge or Knowledge (local) checks (DC 15) once Grubby launches into his story. Those who succeed realize they've heard a similar tale. But no one recalls any mention of fiery breath or such a creature attacking a town large enough to have forty guards. Grubby attempts to enhance any description of the dragon turtle's prowess mentioned over the evening, as townsfolk ask nervous questions, and some even head home to pack a few belongings.

Just after dark, Grubby excuses himself and slips from the tavern, using Move Silently and Hide to escape unseen from the village. He heads for the cove where the orcs wait to warn them of Fogly's defenses. The journey takes about an hour. If questioned about his absence after returning, Grubby claims to have gone for a breath of fresh air.

Development: Presuming the PCs don't hunt down Bogbad and his family tonight (if they do, proceed to the "Orc Cove"), morning arrives. At dawn, Grubby slips out of the tavern once more. He finds a good vantage point of the harbor and waits to sound the alarm as the dragon turtle ship sails into the harbor. Once Fogly is on alert, Grubby dashes about town, adding to the panic and general mayhem. Proceed to "The Attack!"

ORC COVE (EL 3)

Until dawn, the orcs wait in their boat about a mile north of the village in a small cove.

The boat is a huge, green dragon turtle shell. It moves as a standard rowboat (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 150). The orcs have refined their ship recently; it now has a moveable timber head protruding from the front. Anyone who makes a successful Spot check (DC 15) can see it's a fake from 60 feet away. In the morning mist, the difficulty increases to DC 20.

Within, the shell forms a large, domed chamber approximately 20 feet round and 10 feet high. Numerous pieces of fine furniture have been nailed down about the room; unfortunately, the orcs have scrawled filthy writing over each article, making the lot valueless. A large locked chest lies near the head (see below).

Creatures: Bogbad isn't really the leader of the group; he never actually gets to make any decisions. That task is taken by his wife Breedbound Fellface.

Bogbad, Male Orc Ftr1: CR 1; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 4 in. tall); HD 1d6+1; hp 7; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15; Atk +4 melee (1d8+3, heavy mace) or +3 ranged (1d8/crit 19–20, light crossbow); SQ darkvision 60 ft., light sensitivity; AL CE; SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 17, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 11, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +5*, Craft (weaving) +3, Hide +3, Move Silently +3, Spot +1. *Feats:* Dodge, Power Attack.

*Includes –2 armor check penalty.

Possessions: potion of cure light wounds, chain shirt, small steel shield, heavy mace, light crossbow with 2 bolts (he is only allowed 2 bolts, as his wife thinks he is incompetent with the weapon).

Breedbound Fellface, Female Orc Bbn2: CR 2; Medium-size Humanoid (6 ft. tall); HD 2d12; hp 18; Init

+1; Spd 40 ft.; AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 15; Atk +6 melee (1d12+6/crit ×3, greataxe) or +3 ranged (1d8 +1/crit ×3, mighty composite longbow [+1 Str]); SA rage 1/day; SQ darkvision 60 ft.; light sensitivity, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC); AL CE; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will –2; Str 18, Dex 13, Con 11 Int 9, Wis 7, Cha 6.

Skills: 15 Hide +2, Jump +5*, Move Silently +2, Pick Pockets +2, Wilderness Lore +2. *Feats:* Blind-fight.

*Includes –4 armor check penalty.

Possessions: potion of spider climb, breastplate, greataxe, mighty composite longbow [+1 Str] with 20 arrows, noble's outfit, silver ring with gold filigree work (150 gp), two vials of fine perfume (20 gp each), gold choker (200 gp), great iron key (to the chest below).

Bogbad and Breedbound have four sons. Each is armed with a heavy crossbow and a scimitar.

Orcs (4): hp 4, 4, 5, 5; *Monster Manual* 146 except Atk +3 melee (1d6+3/crit 18–20, scimitar) or +1 ranged (1d10/crit 19–20, heavy crossbow).

Tactics: If forced into battle, Breedbound immediately rages and charges the nearest character. If reduced to half her hit points, she draws her potion (she has no idea what it does) and drinks it. She looks momentarily confused when nothing obvious happens, then continues to fight.

The four sons follow their mother gleefully into battle. They try to break away only if half their number fall, but they flee into the boat and try to row away.

Bogbad follows his family into a fight much more cautiously. He makes use of his two bolts before closing into battle with a weak-looking character. He fights only until reduced to half his hit points, then attempts to flee down the coast.

Locked, Reinforced Wooden Chest: 1 in. thick; hardness 5; hp 15; Break (DC 23); Open Lock (DC 20).

Treasure: The chest contains the orcs' plunder. In various bags and sacks they've stored 400 sp, 100 gp, and 50 pp; a small green bottle with gold stopper (25 gp) that contains a *potion of heroism;* and numerous valuable ladies clothes, two articles of which have yet to be spoiled by Breedbound: a green dress with silver buttons (75 gp) and a blue gown with amethysts sewn down the front (100 gp).

THE ATTACK! (EL 3)

The morning of the attack dawns misty and overcast. Grubby sounds the alarm as the ship approaches the shore, and the roaring of the "dragon turtle" begins. This noise is created by three of the orc sons growling and snarling through megaphones. A Listen check (DC 15) reveals that the growling of the beast is actually composed of several individual snarls. Also, allow the PCs a Spot check (DC 15—as described in "Orc Cove") to notice the false head sprouting from the front of the shell.

Unless PCs convince them otherwise (Diplomacy, DC 20, and they need proof of some sort), the villagers flee, leaving the place deserted. The boat soon emerges from the mist, and the orcs land. Unless they're attacked, they plunder the village. See "Orc Cove" for the family's tactics.

For Breedbound and her sons, the most important goal is to make sure no one can spread the word of their ship, so they fight until slain (see "Orc Cove" for the orcs' statistics and tactics). Bogbad, on the other hand, is more concerned about staying alive.

CONCLUSION

If the PCs flee, the orcs plunder the town and move on. If they stay and defeat the raiders, a number of other adventures could spring from this one.

• A local noble hears about the dragon turtle boat and approaches the PCs to use it to rid a nearby island of pirates.

• Gruntruff Slaphead appears on the scene a few days after the PCs kill the orcs and decides that through orc tradition, the crimes of Bogbad are now their crimes. Using hostages, he coerces the PCs into making him a new wig to replace the burnt one. He demands that the new one is exactly the same as the old one—made of the pelt of a fiendish dire wolf. Ω

Richard is a real life ranger who spends his time thwarting plots involving foul constructs in the spring, up in his woods and fields. He has just finished work on a full-length comedic fantasy novel.

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

"Hollow Threats" is designed for 1st-level PCs, but it can be modified for parties of different sizes or levels. Consider adapting the adventure as follows:

2nd- and 3rd-level PCs: Give Grubby an accomplice, add a level each to Bogbad and Breedbound Fellface, and double the number of sons.

4th- and 5th-level PCs: Make Bogbad's sons 1st-level barbarians. Add two levels to both he and his wife. Make Grubby a 5th-level rogue who uses poison and is willing to fight with the orcs if they are confronted.

If you really want to complicate things for a higher-level party, consider having a furious Gruntruff show up as the battle between the PCs and orcs ensues. He could be accompanied by as many as a dozen orcs, and is both furious and intrigued by his former employee's exploits. Which side of the battle he joins is up to you.

PROVINCIAL PRIOR CAUSE

BY JOHNNY L. WILSON

ARTWORK BY VAL MAYERICK · CARTOGRAPHY BY KYLE HUNTER

Magic Items · Monsters · NPCs · Objects · Settlements · Traps

Based on an idea from T.H. Lain.

"Provincial Prior Cause" is a short D&D adventure for four 1st-level characters. It is ideal for moving adventuring parties from one geographical area to another via a large body of water. Although designed for a party with a paladin or cleric who is willing to be part of the Soldiers of the Sun (loosely based on the Templars), any party can end up on the adventure by encountering a dying or dead cleric and reading his letter from the Master General. Although the adventure can be set in any world with a coastline, the basic design here reflects events prior to those in T.H. Lain's *The Bloody Eye*.

BACKGROUND

When King Ingemar banished the Soldiers of the Sun from his land, they were forced to relocate their entire organization. The heads of the order, including Master General Theobald of Aquitaine, set a plan in motion to establish two bases of operations in different countries to minimize the chances of such a decree so thoroughly disrupting the group in the future. The Soldiers of the Sun tasked two of their most trusted members with half of the order's treasury each, sending them with a contingent of trusted guards to begin the construction of the new havens.

One of these Soldiers was the Provincial Prior Augustin Calmet. Sent to the backwater region of Caledon, Calmet soon fell out of contact with his order. Unknown to the Soldiers of the Sun, the prior became enchanted with the ancient, rural religion of Caledon and abandoned his faith to worship the god Gruumsh (a Celtic version of this deity would be Balor, not to be confused with the demon of the same name).

Meanwhile, concerned about the fate of the half of the treasure entrusted to the prior (as well as about the fate of their fellow Soldier of the Sun), the organization has decided to enlist the aid of some brave adventurers to discover what has happened in Caledon.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

One of the PCs receives a letter from the Master General of the Soldiers of the Sun indicating that Provincial Prior Augustin Calmet, sent to Caledon to set up a haven for the order recently banned in the master general's homeland (as Templars were in France under King Phillip IV), has disappeared with the portion of the order's treasury. The prior was supposed to preserve the funds from the grasping hands of the homeland's sovereign, but no one in the order has heard from him in weeks.

While attempting to solve the mystery, the PCs encounter opposition that foreshadows more. At the prior's hermitage, on an island in a loch, they find a grotto beneath his hermitage with an alchemical laboratory, chapel, and library. They discover that Calmet was extremely taken with the old gods from the frontier—especially Gruumsh—and, in his desire to wreak revenge upon King Ingemar, sold his destiny to Gruumsh, the one-eyed god of the old tales. They also discover that he has taken the order's treasury with him to another location—one sacred to the ancient deities.

BEGINNING THE ADVENTURE

The adventure begins when the PCs arrive in Ratik or any other land with a rocky shoreline. The shipmaster knows the cove where they are to land and uses the

ship's dingy to bring them close enough to wade ashore and meet the envoy herald, their guide to the hermitage. Before starting the action, however, read or summarize the letter from the Master General (see the player's handout).

Once the PCs have perused the letter, read or paraphrase the following as their boat approaches the shore:

A low-lying mist makes the shadowed cliffside look like it rises from a gray slate cloud. You have been told that the dark scar of shadow in the midst of the cliff disguises a path to its summit. The misty fingers of fog grab at your legs with a cold grasp of uneasiness. The envoy herald should have been here by now, but you see no sign of him.

SHORELINE (EL 2)

The following text assumes that the PCs wade ashore. If you feel like making the characters make Spot checks (DC 12) to see the dead soldier lying on the shore, feel free. If this is the case and the PCs fail their checks, continue to the boar attack below. The PCs should find the body after the battle no matter what, since it serves as an important plot device.

You stumble across a mail-clad figure, brutally bloodied and partially eaten. The dripping blood on his snow white tabard nearly covers the solar symbol of Pelor emblazoned over his heart. A heavy mace with a stylized sun atop its head is grasped in his hand. He is clearly dead.

Creature: Before the party can discover what killed the fighter, a wild boar charges out from the shadowy cleft and attacks.

Boar: hp 22; *Monster Manual* 194.

Tactics: The boar charges the largest PC and keeps attacking that foe until the boar or the character is killed.

After the boar is dead, read the following:

As the killing blow is dealt, the boar turns its head to face its killer. For the first time, you notice that this boar has only one eye—a wild, angry eye that looks as red as the blood seeping from its wounds—that glares at you with intense hatred.

The body on the shore is that of the envoy herald the PCs were supposed to meet. He was attacked and killed

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"My Hardy Friends,
It is with the deepest anxiety that I must call upon thee to render a service to our order. As our intelligence indicated that His Bellicose Majesty King Ingemar intended to imprison all members of our order, seize our property, and confiscate our treasure, I commissioned two of our most fiscally sound priors to carry our treasury to safety in two disparate directions. One prior has successfully established a sanctum for our order in Whitefang Bay with the funds with which he was entrusted. The other, in most despicable shame, has disappeared with our gold. With heavy heart, I must ask you to trace the whereabouts of one Augustin Calmet, a Provincial Prior of our order, who was dispatched to the forest near Ratik to found a place of refuge for our brothers. Find him, I beseech you. Seek him out and compel him to repent and return the treasury of our brotherhood. Failing that objective, condemn him to the one we

by the boar while waiting for the PCs' arrival after his escort climbed to the top of the cleft to scout the area. The escorts ran into some problems of their own (see "Cliff Top," below).

CLEFT PASSAGEWAY (EL 2)

A dark, barely 5-foot-wide cleft slashes through the cliff-face ahead, angling up steeply. The sides of the crevice are rough and rocky, while the floor is one large sand drift spilling down from the plateau above.

A simple Listen check (DC 10) allows PCs to hear several horses at the top of the cliff. An easy Spot check (DC 10) enables them to see the passageway through the rock that they spotted from the boat.

Trap: The horse thieves (see "Cliff Top") who frequently use this cleft have trapped it with a pair of spiked, spring-loaded planks. The two boards are concealed behind spurs in the rock about knee high to a human. When a PC steps on a trigger mechanism hidden in the sand of the cleft, both boards release. One targets the PC stepping on the trigger; the other is released 5 feet behind the first. The envoy's escort found the trap and climbed around it (Climb, DC 12).

Spiked Boards: CR 2; +12 melee (1d10); Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 20).

CLIFF TOP (EL 2)

Should the PCs circumvent the trap, they surprise the horse thieves at the top of the cliff. Read or paraphrase the following if this is the case:

As you reach the top of the cliff, you see six horses, saddled and ready to go, and two bodies lying face down in spreading pools of blood. One scruffy fellow attempts to hold all six horses by the reins, while another has just used his club to strike down a squire in the livery of the envoy herald.

If the trap goes off, the horse thieves are prepared for the PCs' arrival. In that case, the scoundrel holding the horses has dropped the reins and turns to face the new foes. If the trap goes off and the PCs take more than a minute to reach the top of the cleft, the bandits finish off the herald and actually set an ambush for the characters. Use opposed Listen and Move Silently checks, as well as opposed Spot and Hide checks, and give the thieves a free surprise round if they remain hidden from view.

Creatures: If any PCs rush to engage the horse thieves, neither attempts to use his shortbow. As soon as the thieves notice the PCs, Sandy drops the reins of the horses, which scatter into the night.

Alexander Pilson, Male Human Rog1: CR 1; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft., 6 in. tall); HD 1d6; hp 5; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 11, flat-footed 12; Atk +2 melee (1d6+2, club) or +1 ranged (1d6/crit ×3, shortbow); AL CE; SV Fort +0, Ref +3, Will +2; Str 14, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 9.

Skills: Craft (trapmaking) +5, Disable Device +5, Hide +5, Intimidate +3, Listen +6, Move Silently +5, Search +5, Spot +6, Tumble +5, Use Rope +5. *Feats:* Dodge, Skill Focus (Hide).

Possessions: leather armor, club, shortbow with 10 arrows, 14 gp.

Sandy Yusler, Male Human Rog1: CR 1; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft., 7 in. tall); HD 1d6+1; hp 6; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12; Atk +0 melee (1d6, club) or +2 ranged (1d6/crit ×3, shortbow); AL CN; SV Fort +1, Ref +4, Will –2; Str 11, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 7, Cha 10.

Skills: Bluff +4, Craft (trapmaking) +5, Hide +6, Intimidate +4, Listen +2, Move Silently +6, Pick Pockets +6, Search +5, Spot +2, Tumble +6. *Feats:* Dodge, Mobility.

Possessions: leather armor, club, shortbow with 10 arrows, 9 gp.

Horses (6): hp 19; *Monster Manual* 196.

Tactics: If the rogues aren't surprised, they begin combat by shooting the first character to emerge from the cleft with their shortbows. Once a foe engages in melee, they drop their bows and draw clubs. Once one of the thieves dies, the other attempts to flee.

Development: Be sure to share the information in the read-aloud text below before the party moves on. If the PCs actively look for the horses, 20 minutes of Searching turns them up.

Once the PCs have either killed, captured, or routed the thieves, the characters quickly discover that the herald is not dead, only unconscious. If revived, he can share the following information:

> When he regains consciousness, the squire tells you his name is Aidan Pym. Hearing of the envoy herald's death at the tusk of a one-eyed boar, he vows vengeance against the old gods and Gruumsh, in particular. He tells you that Gruumsh is the one-eyed evil god of the orcs and agrees to lead you to the hermitage before returning for the envoy herald's body.

Aidan Pym, Male Human War1: CR 1/2; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft., 8 in. tall); HD 1d8+1; hp 6; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 10, flat-footed 13; Atk +2 melee (1d6+1/crit 19–20, short sword); AL LG; SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +1; Str 13, Dex 11, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 14.

Skills: Climb +3*, Handle Animal +5, Ride +3, Swim +0**. *Feats:* Dodge, Lightning Reflexes.

*Includes –1 armor check penalty.

**Includes –4 penalty for weight of gear carried.

Possessions: studded leather, masterwork buckler, short sword, 14 gp.

Ad-hoc XP Award: The PCs should earn 200 bonus experience if they successfully rescue Aidan.

EN ROUTE (EL 3)

The island on which the hermitage is build lies about five miles inland in a loch, but the road ahead isn't entirely clear. Two miles inland, the party encounters a cleric of Gruumsh wearing an eye-patch, a one-eyed falcon, and the cleric's bodyguard. These three are looking for anyone sent by the Soldiers of Light. Calmet informed his new "friends" that someone might come looking for him. Consequently, an archprelate of Gruumsh named Thurston Laud sent Ulmut and Evan to scout for any such interlopers.

> The muddy road stretches before you, making occasional sucking sounds as the horses lift their feet clear of the muck. Silhouetted against the somber gray sky sit two figures astride horses, one with a falcon on his arm. Aidan Pym points and cries, "He's one of the Gruumsh worshipers. At that, he wheels his horse about and flees into the underbrush. The figure with the eye-patch lifts his arm and releases the falcon, while the armored figure at his side charges your way. As the falcon takes flight, you can see that it, too, has only one eye.

Creatures: The cleric doesn't join the battle immediately, but he sends his barbarian companion to attack the PCs as soon as they are spotted. After 1 round, the cleric moves forward and begins casting spells.

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

"Provincial Prior Cause" is designed to challenge four 1st-level PCs, but it can be modified for parties of different sizes or levels. Consider adapting the adventure as follows:

2nd- to 3rd-level PCs: The adventure works fairly well for PCs of 2nd level, but 3rd-level characters need more challenging encounters.

- Add another 1st-level rogue (total three) to area **3**.
- Give Evan (area **4**) another barbarian level.
- Add another darkmantle to area **6**.
- Replace the homunculus (area **8**) with a pair of large zombies.
- Give Durim (area **10**) a level of rogue.
- Give Edfang (area **11**) another level or two of cleric.

4th- to 5th-level PCs: Following the pattern established in the changes above, consider the following options.

- Make the boar in area **1** a dire boar.
- Add another rogue (total four) area **3**, and make them all 2nd level.
- Give Evan another barbarian level (total three) and make Ulmut a 4th-level cleric.
- Replace the darkmantles (area **6**) with a cloaker, or possibly two.
- Replace the homunculus (area **8**) with two Medium-size earth elementals.
- Give Durim a fighter level (making him a Rog1/Ftr1) or replace him with a one-eyed minotaur.
- Give Edfang sufficient cleric levels such that his CR is one higher than the average party level.

Remember that changing the Encounter Levels should raise the amount of treasure in the adventure. Consult page 170 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* (**Tables 7-2**, **7-3**, and **7-4**) to determine treasure appropriate to the new encounters.

Evan Remisthimis, Male Human Bbn1: CR 1; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft., 8 in. tall); HD 1d12+1; hp 13; Init +2; Spd 40 ft.; AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15; SA rage 1/day; Atk +5 melee (1d8+3/crit ×3, battleaxe); AL CN; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 17, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills: Handle Animal +2, Intimidate +3, Listen +3, Ride +4, Search +2, Wilderness Lore +4. *Feats:* Dodge, Weapon Focus (battleaxe).

Possessions: chain shirt, small steel shield, battleaxe, 40 gp.

Falcon: hp 4; *Monster Manual* 197.

Ulmut Thrawn, Male Human Clr2 (Gruumsh): CR 2, Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft., 7 in. tall); HD 2d8+4; hp 14; Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10; Atk +2 melee (1d8+1, morningstar) or +2 melee (damage varies, touch) or +1 ranged (1d8/crit 19–20, light crossbow); AL CE; SV Fort +4, Ref +0, Will +5; Str 13, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 17, Cha 12.

Skills: Concentration +10*, Heal +5, Knowledge (religion) +3, Ride +1, Spellcraft +1. *Feats:* Combat Casting, Spell Focus (Necromancy).

*Includes +4 bonus from Combat Casting.

Spells (4/4; base save DC = 13 + spell level): 0—*cure minor wounds, detect magic, detect poison, light;* 1st—*bane, cure light wounds* ×2, *protection from good**.

*Domain spells. *Domains:* Evil (evil spells cast at +1 caster level), Strength (feat of strength 1/day—+2 enhancement bonus to Strength for 1 round).

Possessions: scroll of *cure light wounds*, half-plate, large steel shield, masterwork morningstar, 50 gp.

Tactics: As Evan and his falcon rush the nearest PC, Ulmut hangs back to cast *protection from good* on himself. He then moves into position to target as many PCs as possible with *bane* before moving to engage them with his morningstar and spontaneous *inflict light wounds* spells.

Development: If Ulmut and company don't report back to the hermitage within a few hours, the inhabitants there get nervous and are unlikely to be surprised by the PCs' arrival.

HERMITAGE

When the party nears the island, share the following description:

> A small cottage is built into the side of hill on the loch's nearest island. Tied to a small dock on the near bank are a number of small rowboats.

Provided he's still alive, Aidan can tell the PCs that the boats are free for visitors to the hermitage to use. He offers to ferry them across.

> Rowing you across to the island, Aidan tells you that the house is completely empty, but even from here you hear strange noises coming from the root cellar.

1. ROOT CELLAR AND TUNNEL (EL 2)

The house is indeed empty. Inside, the PCs find nothing more than a pair of battered wooden chairs, a table with three legs, and a pile of musty blankets half covered with leaves in one corner. When the characters move to investigate the root cellar, read or paraphrase the following:

> The trap door is open and the air is pungent with vegetal odors as you climb down the crude ladder. The cellar holds an assortment of rotting roots and tubers, but on one wall you see a crude opening that appears to become some sort of dark tunnel. From the mouth of the cave, you can hear dripping water. The cavern opening and floor of the cave descends at a gentle grade from the back of the cellar.

Creatures: The tunnel proceeds for roughly 30 feet before bending to the south. As the PCs reach the first bend (marked "B" on the maps), they are ambushed by a group of darkmantles. Allow the characters to make Spot checks opposed by the darkmantles' Hide checks to avoid surprise before the darkmantles trigger their darkness ability and attack.

> An unnatural darkness engulfs you. As you try to peer through the black, you feel long tentacles brush your faces and shoulders.

Darkmantle (2): hp 9; *Monster Manual* 39.

Once the darkmantles are dead, allow the PCs a Spot check (DC 15) to see the blue glow in area **2**.

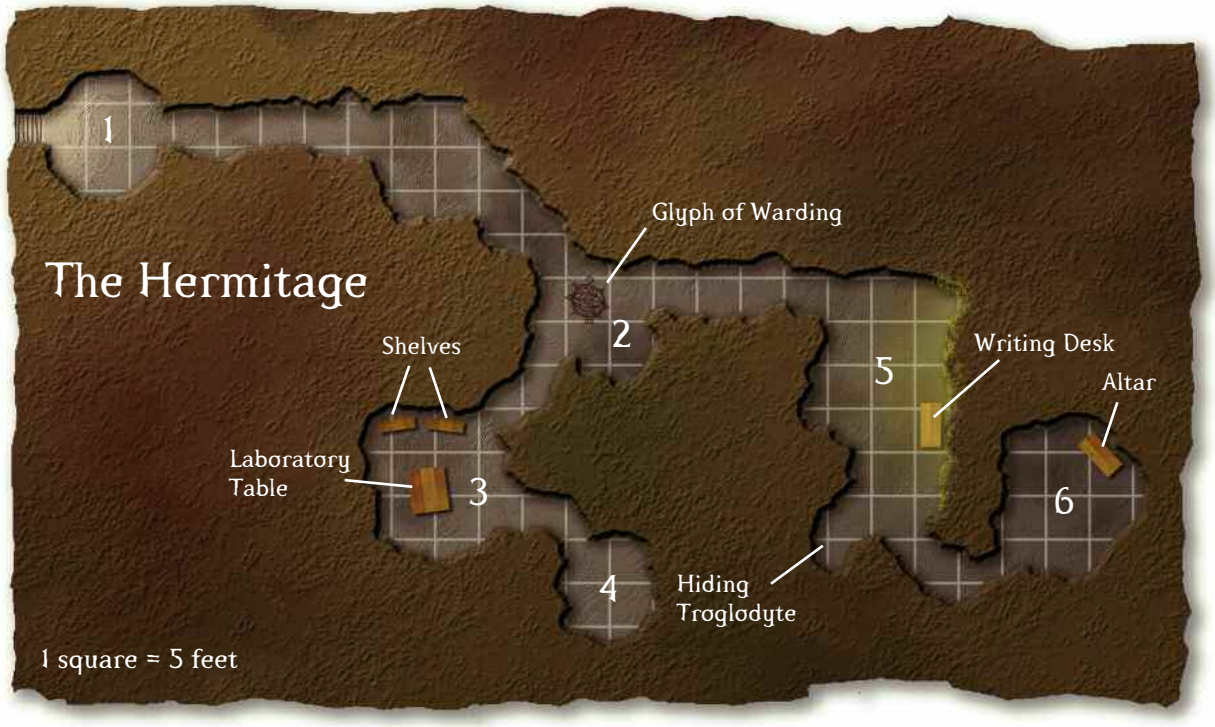
2. GLOW ROOM (EL 2)

This room serves as a warded checkpoint against intruders. The blue glow emanates from the floor of this chamber. It serves as a warning for wary PCs that something is not quite right about the room.

Trap: The characters should be concerned. A *glyph of warding* has been placed on the entrance to the chamber by Thurston Laud, Archprelate of Gruumsh. Unless a character states the passphrase, "Bow to the all-seeing eye of Gruumsh" the glyph is triggered by the first character who steps in the affected area.

Glyph of Warding: CR 2; *ray of enfeeblement* spell; Will save (DC 11) negates; Search N/A; Disable Device (DC 26). *Note:* The *glyph* does not reset once discharged.

After the party is finished with the *glyph,* read or paraphrase the following:



Two passageways fork from this chamber. The southwest passage glows with a trace of torchlight. The east passage is dark.

3. ALCHEMICAL LABORATORY (EL 1)

If the party travels toward the glow to the southwest, they enter Calmet's alchemical laboratory. Calmet has created a homunculus to protect his laboratory and to preserve his potion ingredients and potions. Read the following description and then allow the PCs to make Spot checks opposed by the homunculus's Hide check.

Shelves of fungi, dried leaves, and desiccated body parts are arranged on wooden shelving. A table with mortar and pestle sitting amid a half-dozen jars, two vials, and two candelabras stands in the center of the cavern.

Creature: The homunculus attempts to Hide from the PCs on the top storage shelf. If successful, it jumps from the top shelf and attacks the lead character.

If any of the PCs sees the homunculus, read or paraphrase the following:

In the midst of the leaves and fungi on the top shelf, a tiny creature with a vaguely humanoid form is readying itself to pounce in your direction. The one-eyed creature bares sharp fangs, spreads its tiny wings, and prepares to jump.

Homunculus: hp 16; *Monster Manual* 120.

Tactics: The one-eyed homunculus tries to jump from PC to PC, moving on if a character succumbs to its venom and falls asleep.

Once the party has dealt with the homunculus, they find the treasure listed below.

Treasure: On Calmet's workbench the PCs can find a *potion of delay poison* and two sunrods.

4. CRAFTING ROOM

As the party enters this small area, read or paraphrase the following:

There is nothing here save for a potter's wheel holding a half-formed clay creature similar to the one you just defeated. The bloodstains on the clay give the room a disturbing, coppery odor.

5. LIBRARY (EL 1)

This chamber reeks of sulfur; the scent emanates from a vein of the mineral that cuts through the wall. A writing desk holds quill, ink, parchment, and a stack of animal skin palimpsests. A grimoire and a book of local heraldry are stacked on the floor.

Creature: Calmet's manservant—a troglodyte named Durim—keeps up the library for his master. Unless the PCs have taken extraordinary precautions to be stealthy, the troglodyte has heard them coming and is hiding in the room. The creature won't attack

until the palimpsests on the table are touched or until the PCs attempt to enter the tunnel to the southeast.

If any of the PCs succeed at a Spot check opposed by the troglodyte's Hide check, read the following:

A gray-skinned, lizardlike creature dressed in a leather breechcloth hides near the southeast opening of this cavern. When he realizes that you see him, he flees down the tunnel, glaring at you from his one remaining eye.

Should the PCs attempt to follow Durim, they must contend with the troglodyte's stench ability as soon as they come within 30 feet.

Durim, Male Troglodyte: hp 13; *Monster Manual* 179. Note that the troglodyte, like the other creatures in the cavern, has only one eye.

Tactics: The troglodyte retreats into the tunnel so that he must face only one PC in melee at a time. He triggers his stench ability, sets his longspear against a charge, and waits for someone to come within reach. When the troglodyte's stench is activated, anyone within 30 feet needs to make Fortitude saves (DC 13) or be overcome with nausea. Durim tries to target unaffected PCs with his melee attacks first.

Upon defeating the troglodyte, the party can read the palimpsests.

The top skin was recently scribed. It reads, "Archprelate Laud is correct. We must turn to the more powerful gods and use them for our purposes. He has taught me how to channel the power of Gruumsh, the one-eyed god of the orcs. I believe I can become Gruumsh's avatar by restoring the old gods. I must find and rebuild their holy shrines."

The second skin has a "Hymn to Gruumsh" in one hand with some scribbling that appears to be in Draconic below it. If any PC reads Draconic, the phrase simply reads: "May only be summoned during Beltane ritual." The others have ink scratched off, but no new writing. One is recognizable as the financial accounts of the Soldiers of the Sun before Calmet absconded with their gold.

6. SHRINE (EL 3)

Once the party nears the opening to the final cavern, read or paraphrase the following:

An agonized cry of pain, half-human and half-animal, sounds from the upper tunnel as you approach a cavern. "Desecration!" growls the voice inside the cavern. A bright light flashes and you hear the cry again. As you approach the entrance to the chamber, you see a bugbear eyeing a hammer on the floor with his lone, good eye. A splintered wooden holy symbol with inlaid gold rests on the altar behind him.

Creature: Edfang, the bugbear standing over the hammer, was tasked by Calmet to destroy the Hammer of St. Winfrid. This minor magic item isn't superbly powerful, but it plays an important part in the history of the Soldiers of the Sun because it was once supposedly wielded by a saintly member of their order.

The bugbear can't use the hammer but is perfectly capable of wielding his scimitar effectively.

Edfang, Male Bugbear Clr1 (Gruumsh): CR 3; Medium-size Humanoid (goblinoid); HD 4d8+4; hp 25; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 19, touch 12, flat-footed 17; Atk +5 melee (1d6+3/crit 18–20, scimitar), +5 melee (damage varies, melee touch), or +4 ranged (1d6+3, javelin); SA spells, rebuke undead 2/day; SQ darkvision 60 ft.; Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +6; Str 17, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 9.

Skills: Climb +2, Concentration +7*, Hide +3, Listen +5, Move Silently +6, Spot +5. *Feats:* Alertness, Combat Casting.

*Includes +4 bonus from Combat Casting.

Spells (3/3; base save DC = 13 + spell level): 0—*cure minor, detect magic* ×2, *read magic*; 1st—*cure light wounds, doom, protection from good**.

*Domain spells. *Domains:* Evil (evil spells cast at +1 caster level), Strength (feat of strength 1/day).

Possessions: potion of cure moderate wounds, potion of invisibility, scroll of *inflict light wounds,* masterwork studded leather, morningstar, javelin ×3, note from Calmet (see below), topaz (100 gp), 64 gp, 140 sp.

Tactics: Edfang casts *protection from good* on the first round of combat, then drinks his *potion of invisibility*. In the following round, the bugbear casts *inflict light wounds* from his scroll on any clerics or paladins he can see, or another spellcaster if no holy PCs are present in the group. Once visible, Edfang uses his morningstar primarily, although if someone looks close to death he tries to finish him off with a spontaneous *inflict wounds* spell.

Development: The note carried by the bugbear cleric reads, "When you've finished this simple task, join us at the rendezvous. The rebuilding of Scaun awaits our attentions."

Hammer of St. Winfrid: This *+1 warhammer* radiates a slight aura of positive energy. While it has no effect when wielded in combat, an evil creature who attempts to wield the weapon takes 1d6 points of divine damage. Merely being within 5 feet of the weapon makes evil creatures uncomfortable, although they suffer no penalties for doing so.

Caster Level: 1st; *Prerequisites:* Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *protection from evil; Market Price:* 2,312; *Cost to Create:* 1,312 gp + 80 XP.

Ad-hoc XP Award: Give the PCs a bonus 300 experience if they gather all the clues about the clergy of Gruumsh and learn about Scaun.

CONCLUSION

With the name of Archprelate Laud and the idea of rebuilding Scaun implanted in the party's mind, other adventures can result. The party might be recruited by the Soldiers of the Light to continue to seek Laud, Calmet, and Scaun. The adventurers know that Archprelate Laud is behind a conspiracy to bring more power to the ancient gods and that Calmet has fallen in with this conspiracy. They also know that something is going to happen in or near a place called Scaun.

Such adventures might involve tracking either Laud or Calmet across country, finding out more about Gruumsh, discovering what could be happening at Scaun, or facing down expressions of the more vengeful gods wherever they are found. Encounters with one-eyed monsters can tie together adventures and help the party know they are on the right track. A short campaign builds on this adventure in T.H. Lain's fifth novel, *The Bloody Eye.* Ω

Johnny L. Wilson is President of Paizo Publishing, LLC, as well as author and co-author of several bestselling books on computer games. His SimCity Planning Commission Handbook *and* High Score! The Illustrated History of Electronic Games *provide a nice counterpoint to his theological articles in* The Mercer Dictionary of the Bible *and* Holman Bible Dictionary. *This is his first adventure for* DUNGEON.

ISSUE #97 PREVIEWS

LIFE'S BAZAAR

by Christopher Perkins

The city of Cauldron nestles quietly in the mouth of a dormant volcano. But then people begin to disappear from the streets, and the rumormongers whisper of dark dealings somewhere in—or perhaps below—the once idyllic metropolis. "Life's Bazaar" launches the all-new, first-ever *DUNGEON Magazine* Adventure Path. Begin a new campaign within the Shackled City, or simply run "Life's Bazaar" a own stand-alone module. A D&D adventure for four 1st-level characters.

See page 62 for more details on this exciting new campaign!

HEART OF THE IRON GOD

by Campbell Pentney

Long ago, an order devoted to Heironeous and the powers of good built a massive construct. Designed to guard against the forces of darkness in the area—especially those dedicated to the god of slaughter, Erythnul—this structure resembled a gargantuan iron man. Powered by the soul of a holy worshiper of Heironeous who was willing to give his life for the cause of good, the Iron Colossus wiped out the forces of darkness for miles around. When it was needed no more, it lay dormant; eventually, its existence was forgotten.

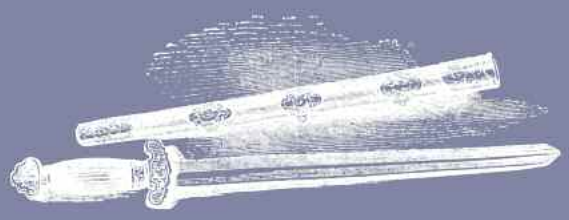
Now the Colossus walks the world again, but this time, on a path of destruction. Does this once potent force for good now operate of its own volition? Or does some dark power now have control of the iron monstrosity? Only a brave group of powerful champions can penetrate the hull of the Colossus and uncover the truth. A D&D adventure for four 13th-level characters.

DEMONBLADE

by Hank Woon

Those who yearn for ultimate power pay a dear price. Lord Tathos longed for the day his father would die and he could take control of his family's lands. When that day comes sooner than expected, the local landholders whisper of Tathos's ambitions.

The situation in and around the town of Manderaun quickly takes a turn for the worse when Tathos's hubris leads him to seek out the terrible weapon known as the *demonblade.* As the blade's imprisoned inhabitant begins a gradual conquest of Tathos's soul, strange creatures from the depths of the Abyss begin to ravage the land. Only determined heroes can stop the creature Tathos has become from raising an army of evil and setting forth on a war of conquest. A D&D adventure for four 16th-level characters.



Marc Sasso

PANDEMONIUM IN THE VEINS

BY FRANK BRUNNER

ARTWORK BY MARC SASSO AND DEREK THOMPSON
CARTOGRAPHY BY ARNIE SWEKEL

"Bodies fall by wild sword-law;
But who would force the Soul, tilts with a straw
Against a Champion cased in adamant."

—*William Wordsworth, "Ecclesiastical Sonnets"*

† Magic Items Monsters NPCs Objects Settlements Traps

"Pandemonium in the Veins" is a gladiatorial D&D adventure suitable for four 5th-level characters. It is both site- and event-based; the primary location is an arena nicknamed the Veins, and the primary events are gladiator matches held therein. Characters who survive should advance to 6th level by the adventure's conclusion, and they might also earn a number of Fame or Infamy points (see "Appendix I: Arena Rules"). The adventure can very easily be adapted for stronger or weaker PCs by increasing or decreasing the number and power of the opponents, as noted in the "Scaling the Adventure" sidebar. Note that although this adventure deals with the topic of drug abuse, such use is not encouraged, and in fact, like the real world, leads to the deaths of NPCs in the adventure. Player characters who indulge risk a similar fate.

"Pandemonium in the Veins" works well in conjunction with "Campaign Components: Gladiators" in *Dragon Magazine* #303. Expanded rules for gladiatorial combat and campaigns can make this adventure even more exciting for your players.

BACKGROUND

Constructed nearly five hundred years ago, the Nyos Amphitheater takes its nickname, the Veins, from the scarlet striations that run through its white marble building blocks. Over the bloody centuries, the Veins has played host to many of the most famous pit fighters in the land.

Last year in the "Thunder Throwdown" match, one fighter unwittingly provoked a madman whose prescription for vengeance threatens to destroy the arena. That fighter was Thel Achillia, she of the trademark triple-plaited hair and adamantine-trimmed leather armor, and the provocation was a particularly memorable kill—namely, when Thel bull rushed rival gladiator Arxus Nod into an Ankheg Pit. Thel was not being cruel; combat in the Veins is bloodsport, and she also knew that the arena clerics could *raise* Arxus after the event.

Thel didn't count on Arxus's demented father.

Paramezzus Nod saw in his son's death the chance to prove himself. For long years, toiling as the arena physician in his office below the stands, Paramezzus listened to the echoing cheers of the crowd. The happy sounds haunted him. Gladiators won glory and the adoration of thousands, clerics drew plaudits and gifts of golden rings from raised fighters, but Paramezzus and his alchemical skill languished unrewarded. Where was the laurel for the tonic that soothes the sword-sore muscle? Where the championship helm for the blood-staunching cataplasm, and where the medal for the oil that glistens on posing fighters' chests? With each slight, Paramezzus grew more embittered. Seeking to combine his alchemy with the priestly powers he both despised and coveted, he took up the blunt club of Erythnul the Many, Lord of Slaughter, and researched arcane and terrible new physicks. He believed he had succeeded in making

discoveries of unsurpassed puissance, and when his son died, in a paroxysm of hubris he forbid the arena clerics from *raising* the gladiator. Instead, he tried to use his most potent distillations to revivify the young warrior in the hopes of bringing him back stronger, faster, and deadlier. Then everyone would witness Paramezzus's power.

Of course, the father failed miserably. His foul concoctions ravaged the boy's body beyond aid, rendering it down to a foul, black ichor. Unstable to begin with, Paramezzus now slipped completely into madness; as his son's remains deliquesced, so did his psyche.

The crazed alchemist blames not himself but Thel, the other gladiators, and the arena for Arxus's death. He has concocted a scheme for revenge that began when he made the illicit drug bloodrush available to the Veins gladiators (see the sidebar for bloodrush's statistics). Fighters who have secretly developed a bloodrush habit are unaware of the drug's debilitating, and ultimately lethal, effects. Already, many gladiators have died from its use. Once his toxic attrition has sufficiently thinned the ranks of the professional fighters, Paramezzus plans to complete his perfidy by striking Thel, the fans, and the arena itself, possibly slaughtering thousands in his mad quest for vengeance.

Meanwhile, Thel has no idea that Paramezzus is behind the gladiator deaths. She does know that the physician with the crooked spine has always hated her. At first, it was because Arxus loved her and she rejected him. Punctuated by execrable poetry and unaccepted invitations to the Nyos Gardens Cotillion, those years were hard enough. But after she threw Arxus to the ankhegs and the revivification was botched, she realized that Paramezzus must writhe at night with hatred for her. Still, she considers Paramezzus too frail and doddering to be a serious threat.

Sand Net, on the other hand, is neither frail nor doddering.

Two main gladiator stables vie for supremacy in the Veins: Sand Net and Thel's eponymous stable, Achillia. Sand Net has ties to the Nyos Thieves' Guild and is headed by the current arena champion, the erudite colossus Volpone Venazzi. Venazzi and his organized criminals have corrupted the arena commissioner and constantly pressure Thel to sell her Veins ownership shares, which currently constitute a slim majority. Thel suspects that Sand Net is behind the knife murder of her father two years ago, the former Achillia stable boss, and even though some Sand Net gladiators have perished of the current mysterious illness, Thel suspects that Sand Net orchestrated those deaths as a cover for their activities.

Achillia stable has been decimated by the recent bloodrush killings. Because Paramezzus hates Thel's stable more than any other, he has been especially aggressive in the locker rooms and baths when hawking his vile drug to Achillia gladiators. The remaining Achillia gladiators are growing increasingly paranoid, and the traditional rivalry between Sand Net and Achillia have reached the boiling point. Even a chance meeting between Achillia and Sand Net fighters in the bazaar might lead to drawn blades.

With her last relative, her father, dead, and with her gladiators dying, Thel stands athwart the tides of fortune, fighting for her arena and her stable—and desperately looking for help.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

In a bustling bazaar, two Sand Net rogues steal up to a wheeled cage and pick the lock, releasing a slavering, arena-bound manticore on the innocent city folk. The characters dispatch the manticore and thereby win the attention of both the Sand Net and Achillia gladiator stables. Achillia recruits the PCs, and Sand Net marks the meddling characters for surveillance and possible extermination.

Stable houses, training fields, arena clerics, beast pens, and more are off limits to civilians; therefore, the characters assume gladiator identities and go undercover to stop more prize fighter deaths. As official doctor and unofficial procurer in the Veins, Paramezzus has been eagerly applying bloodrush poultices to the gladiators' necks before their matches. Ultimately, the PCs link the killings to the alchemist's base drug. When Paramezzus is faced with evidence of his treachery, a *contingency* spell whisks him to the pits, where he frees all the gladiatorial beasts, sets the arena ablaze with alchemist's fire, and then sets off to kill Thel amid the chaos. His son, who survives as a ghost possessing a black pudding, harries the PCs while they fight through a stadium gone mad, trying to stop Paramezzus, save Thel, and protect the fans.

RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

The first portion of the adventure is event-based. The four events marked "Plot" (**Events 2**, **6**, **10**, and **17**) are essential to the plot and presented in chronological order. Other events are grouped along with these events into "blocks." In general, events in a block can be staged in any order. See the timeline for a list of events by block and time. At nearly any point in the event-based portion of the adventure, a PC or a DM can initiate a gladiatorial match using one of the gladiators from the "Independent Gladiators" sidebar. The match can be given an extra twist by consulting the

"Spice on the Sand" sidebar. Also, PCs can (and should) leave the keyed events and interrogate suspects, witnesses, and bystanders throughout the arena at any point. Use the appropriate "Gather Information" sidebars (**Event Block A** or **Event Blocks B and C**) to assess the results of their investigations.

The second portion of the adventure is a site-based room-to-room slugfest (or sneakfest or gabfest, if parties are so inclined). Simply track the players' actions through the locker rooms, the Cloud Boxes, and the rest of the Veins as you would through a normal dungeon.

ADVENTURE HOOKS

The Nyos Amphitheater can be placed in any major urban center. The following hooks can pull the PCs into the action:

- Achillia youth Rufillius "Short Fang" Syreme recruits the PCs after they face down a rampaging manticore in the Amphitheater Bazaar.
- A PC or friendly NPC exhibits symptoms matching those of the dying gladiators (Paramezzus was covertly doping the ale at the Spotted Mastiff with test prototypes of bloodrush the last time the PC or NPC stopped by to lift a flagon). To save her, the party must discover what is felling the gladiators. In fact, because of the prototypical nature of the ingested drug, the character is in no danger—but she doesn't know that.
- The PCs respond to an Achillia kiosk poster offering a 250 gp signing bonus for any new fighters joining up to replace stricken veterans. There is an additional reward of 1,000 gp for information that helps stop the deaths.
- A former comrade-in-arms or henchman of the PCs strapped on arena armor after leaving the party. The character is now dying and appeals to them for help. "I've nothing to offer you now, but if you get me well and out of this priest's armpit they call a temple, I'll show you how to slaughter a girallon bare-handed."

LET'S GET READY TO RUMBLE

Start through the following events and event blocks when you're ready to begin.

1. A MANTICORE IN THE CHINA SHOP—THE BAZAAR (AREA V6)

Stick and Drag, two Sand Net members, have loosened the bolts on a manticore cage. The cage door works open in the middle of the arena Bazaar, and the manticore, though still chained, crashes out of the cage and flails mightily against his tether. The hapless Achillia handlers can only duck and cover with the rest of the market-goers while the PCs bring down the beast.

> Fruit mongers, criers, beggars, vintners, cobblers, weavers, and glassblowers all vend and toil in this open-air market. Suddenly, a bony black spike splits a nearby coconut, which begins gushing milk. A panicked hue rises behind you.

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

"Pandemonium in the Veins" is intended for four 5th-level characters, but it can be modified for parties of different sizes or levels. Consider adapting the adventure as follows:

1st- and 2nd-level PCs: Run the adventure as written, but with the following adjustments:

- Reduce all classed NPCs by 2–3 levels. Make Paramezzus a Sor3/Clr1.
- Change the girallons to wolves, the owlbear to a worker giant ant, the manticore to a bugbear, the phantom fungi to violet fungi, the huge zombie to a large zombie, and the wyvern to a medium air elemental.
- Make Arxus a gray ooze and the ochre jelly a gelatinous cube.

3rd- and 4th-level PCs: Run the adventure as written, but with the following adjustments:

- Reduce all classed NPCs by 1–2 levels.
- Change the girallons to lions, the phantom fungi to violet fungi (but let Paramezzus cast *invisibility* on them first), and the wyvern to a griffon.
- Make Arxus an ochre jelly and the ochre jelly a gray ooze.

6th- and 7th-level PCs: Run the adventure as written, but with the following adjustments:

- Increase all classed NPCs by 1–2 levels.
- Change the phantom fungi to a tendriculos, the ankheg to a bulette, the manticore to a chimera, the huge zombie to a gargantuan zombie, and the wyvern to a dragonne.
- Give Arxus a level of sorcerer and a toad familiar that he will die to protect from his father.

8th- and 9th-level PCs: Run the adventure as written, but with the following adjustments:

- Increase all classed NPCs by four levels.
- Add a lamia to the manticore encounter, add a tendriculos to the phantom fungi encounter, make the girallons athachs, make the huge zombie a gargantuan zombie, and make the wyvern a dragon turtle and the Caltrop Match a naval battle (the PCs are given one 10-foot raft to perch on).
- Give Arxus four levels of sorcerer, a toad familiar as above, and several *potions of haste* he keeps stashed in the foundation.
- Place a *mirror of opposition* in Paramezzus's office.

This manticore was condemned to the arena for rapine in the Sheldomar valley farmlands. Stable Achillia bought his contract and was delivering him to the Veins when the Sand Net factors struck, trying to make Achillia look dangerously incompetent in the eyes of the commoners. Stick and Drag have vanished by the time the PCs face the manticore, although Sand Net sympathizers in the crowd inform the nefarious factors of what transpires.

Creature: The manticore is Gar. Because he has not yet had his tail clipped for arena fighting, he is able to use his full attacks.

Gar, Male Manticore: hp 57; *Monster Manual* 130.

Neck Fetter: 1 in. thick; hardness 10; hp 20; Break DC 26; Open Lock DC 20.

Tactics: Gar flies up to the 50-foot limit of his chain and thrashes furiously, trying to break the fetter. Once attacked, he looses volleys of six tail spikes each round for 4 rounds while winging to and fro as high in the air as possible. On the fifth round, because he is out of spikes, Gar uses the dive action, which makes his claw attacks do double damage, although he must forgo his bite attack this round (see the *Monster Manual*, page 7, for more details). In subsequent rounds, Gar attempts to maul any the six Achillia handlers still standing or the PCs, should any of them attack the beast.

Note that multiple strategies can be successful with Gar. If a rogue leaps into the wheeled cage and picks the lock on Gar's chain, the evil creature immediately flaps away, his chain dangling but his heart singing with freedom. Similarly, a PC who succeeds at a Diplomacy check (DC 20) can persuade Gar to relent momentarily.

GATHER INFORMATION CHECKS (EVENT BLOCK A)

Charismatic PCs can pick up many clues from garrulous arena folk. In the first part of the adventure, using the Gather Information skill, a character can glean the following:

- **DC 10:** Arfgutter, mountain barbarian—"They are all berserkers like Arfgutter! By the gods, who knew city scum could fight like the crazed bear?"
- **DC 15:** Tiber Atkannis, above-the-knee amputee gladiator—"I still do security for Venazzi, surveillance mostly, and let me tell you he's breathing fire over this. No way is Sand Net behind the gladiator killings."
- **DC 20 followed by an Innuendo check DC 10:** Scrap of parchment bearing Sand Net seal, caught in a sparring dummy's armor, in local Thieves' Cant—"[unreadable] hog's high on mark's waterlegs. More whip and Thel's upping it all in a wince." Translation: "Volpone Venazzi is happy with you scaring Thel. Keep threatening her and she will sell her shares in the arena soon."
- **DC 25:** M'baye Kampo, honeyball concessionaire—"I sold a lot of honeyballs this last year to fighters after their matches. I heard one say that he is always hungry after the heat of the blood rush. Sadly, the gladiators who were my best customers keep dying. But I assure you, it is not the honeyballs. They are safe!"
- **DC 15:** Huffa Beame, Sand Net teamster—"I just haul stuff. Lots of weapons, lots of sand, lots of herbs. It's a good thing I don't get paid by the wagonload or every dragon in the kingdom would be after my hoard." If the PCs ask about the herbs, Huffa can direct them to Fra Lorenzo (see the "Gather Information (**Event Blocks B and C**)" sidebar).
- **DC 15:** Diamond Dharina, arena announcer—"Commissioner Flugg has been spending a lot of time with Volpone Venazzi lately. I don't know what those two are cooking up, but if you're serious about saving our fighters, I think you should talk with them."

If a character directs his questions to a particular NPC, use the following results with either a successful Diplomacy, Gather Information, or Intimidate check (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide* page 149):

- **DC 20:** Paramezzus Nod, base alchemist—"I'm surprised you're asking my opinion. Usually everyone just ignores the arena physician. Since you asked, yes, I do have a suspicion. I believe this outbreak resembles the leech diseases in Port Rhemis fifteen years ago. I suggest you investigate the Baths very closely. Now go away and let your betters do their work." Paramezzus is happy to send the PCs barking down this false trail. If questioned about the alchemist's fire on the locker room benches, Paramezzus states flatly, "I had nothing to do with that." The PCs can make a Sense Motive check opposed by Paramezzus's Bluff check at any time to see if he's telling the truth. See the "Gather Information (**Event Blocks B and C**)" sidebar if the PCs ask Paramezzus if they can see the corpses of the most recently deceased gladiators.
- **DC 10:** Rufillius Syreme, aspiring gladiator—"The Golden Shambler was the only gladiator I really knew. Whatever killed him, it wasn't a man. The Shambler could take any man that lives!"
- **DC 15:** Stick and Drag, Sand Net factors—"We don't fight in the arena, but sure, we hear things. We were delivering some packages from Fra Lorenzo to Paramezzus one night, and we heard that Thel is doing this to herself. She's sick of running the stable and is looking for a way out." See the "Gather Information (**Event Blocks B and C**)" sidebar for details on Fra Lorenzo.
- **DC 10:** Trixa Hatchet, gorgeous manager—See **Event 5**.
- **DC 10:** Thel Achillia, haggard stable boss—See **Event 2**.
- **DC 18:** Alfonse Drellus, scumbag father—See **Event 5**.

Note that the PCs probably won't be able to interview Volpone Venazzi or Commissioner Flugg yet, as those two Veins luminaries don't deign to speak to anyone with fewer than 10 Fame points.

If a PC then gets the keys from one of the Achillia handlers, she can unlock the manticore's collar, again allowing the criminal monster to fly away harmlessly. (At your discretion, good-aligned PCs might face alignment difficulties for allowing a condemned pillager to go free.) If a PC wins an opposed Bluff check (the manticore's Sense Motive skill modifier is –1), he can convince the manticore to go quietly back into the cage by promising to secure a contract with Commissioner Flugg, under which Gar will never face a deadly match during his sentence in the arena.

Development: If at least one PC makes a Diplomacy check (DC 10), the party collects a total of 500 gp from grateful shopkeepers, minus 25 gp for each round of combat, since merchants whose tents are ruined cannot afford a reward.

Because of their tussle with the manticore, the PCs come to the attention of both the Sand Net and Achillia stables. Rufillius "Short Fang" Syreme immediately tries to recruit the PCs for Achillia; this is detailed in **Event 2**. He pushes his way out of the crowd as soon as the manticore is dealt with. If the PCs elude or ignore him, he does not give up. Rufillius eventually discovers where the PCs are staying, and he stakes out that establishment until he meets the PCs; he then attempts to recruit them. Rufillius is desperate for someone to save his stable and replace his fallen idol and mentor, the Golden Shambler.

Sand Net, on the other hand, merely monitors the PCs' progress anonymously at this point. If the PCs join Achillia in **Event 2**, Sand Net mobilizes Stick and Drag once more to strike the PCs in **Event 3**.

2. THE GAMES MUST GO ON (PLOT)—THE BAZAAR AND THE ARENA FLOOR (AREAS V2 & V6)

If the PCs handled the manticore successfully, Rufillius (use the pregenerated rogue stats on page 55 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* if you need them for Rufillius) asks them to help the Achillia Stable at the gladiatorial arena.

A boy with eyes as big as a mace's head and a leather training belt five sizes too big for his waist pushes forward out of your admiring crowd. "Wow!" he exclaims. "That was great! Can you come with me to Stable Achillia? I can pay you. We really need help. Gladiators have been dying, and no one knows why. Even the Golden Shambler died!" He pauses in his continuous stream of babble and looks down forlornly at his training belt. Then he looks back up at you with renewed passion. "Please help! I promise you, the pay is good, and the glory is even better! You could be heroes!"

TIMELINE

Event Block A (Events 1–6)
A. Thel hires the PCs.
B. The PCs begin their investigation.
C. The PCs learn that Sand Net and Achillia are rival gladiator stables.
D. The PCs learn that many of the gladiators exude a curious mint smell.

Event Block B (Events 7–10)
A. The PCs discover that someone is individually targeting Thel.
B. The PCs pursue their investigation of the gladiator deaths.
C. The PCs find an herbalist, Fra Lorenzo, who might help them.
D. The PCs recover a used bloodrush poultice from their battle royal with Team Tongue.

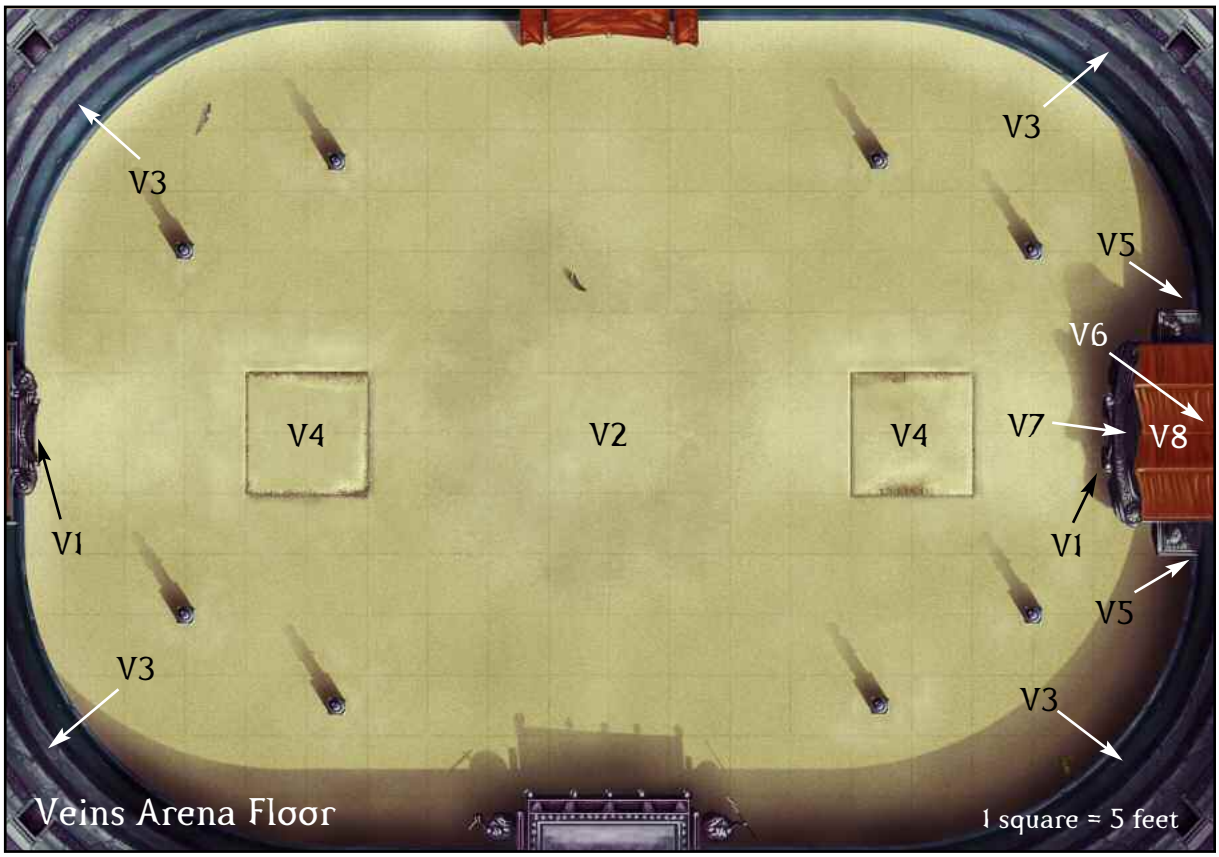
Event Block C (Events 11–17)
A. With Fra Lorenzo's help, the PCs link the gladiator deaths to the bloodrush poultices and Paramezzus.
B. Arxus confronts the PCs and tries to force them to win Thel's love for the ghostly pudding.
C. The PCs confront Paramezzus, and he teleports away to destroy the Veins.

Site-based Adventure (Areas B1–V8)

Although not destitute, Rufillius can offer the PCs no more than the 1 gold piece he solemnly presses into each of their palms. More will come from Thel, he avers, after the PCs' audition. Rufillius's leather belt is a gift from the Golden Shambler given before that champion expired from bloodrush use. Rufillius refuses to let anyone touch the belt (which actually contains an important clue, although Rufillius is unaware of that—see **Event 12**). Also, he becomes petulant if the PCs call him by his given name rather than "Short Fang."

Rufillius leads the players to the entrance of the Veins.

The narrow tent labyrinth of the bazaar gives way to open space, and the grand arena known as the Veins looms into view. At first, the walls are nothing but a singularly massive, blinding sheet of white marble gleaming in the sun, but gradually individual features resolve themselves. The third story rings the building with lancet arches, each containing a statue of a champion from the arena's history. On the top story, turrets fly banners of the major stables that fight in the Veins. Wide ramps soar up the walls, and concessionaires trundle carts up and down, shouting their wares. Everywhere, the pris-



tine white stone is veined with the vermilion streaks that give the Nyos Amphitheater its famed moniker.

Overriding everything else is the impression of size. In Nyos, the townsfolk say that twenty krakens with tentacles spread wide could not encompass the walls of the mighty arena. The formidable building is the sort of structure that makes such tales seem true—a larger-than-life arena built for larger-than-life heroes.

The PCs can stop to talk to the vendors, the fans, and the aspiring gladiators outside. If they so choose, consult the "Gather Information (**Event Block A**)" sidebar for the results of their inquiries. Otherwise, Rufillius continues to lead them inside through area **V7**.

The interior of the Veins is no less impressive. Each building block is taller than two longswords and just as wide. You smell sweat and oil from the locker rooms below, and the clang of steel on steel resounds from sparring chambers. The Veins throbs with activity.

The entrance tunnel to the arena is enormous. Deep claw-scratches in the marble tell of the chained beasts dragged into the arena to fight the mighty champions who make their living in front of the crowds. Halfway into the tunnel, a portcullis bars the entrance to the arena floor itself, leaving open only narrow passages up into the stands.

Short Fang leads the way up to the spectator seats. Once again the bright sun is nearly blinding, reflecting off the vast expanse of sand that covers the arena floor. Archery targets, portable paddocks, weapon racks, and armor trunks are scattered haphazardly across the giant fighting floor. Wooden bleachers on marble tiers rise high into the air behind you. Thousands of fans could fit in this amphitheater. Sixty feet overhead, chains creak as they support the hanging, enclosed luxury seats known as Cloud Boxes.

A table is set up in the sand at the near end of the arena floor, just over the marble rail from where you emerge. At the table sit an orange-haired fat man, an imposing fighter in fancy full plate, and a woman with three braids in her hair. In front of the table, two bare-chested men are screaming at each other. "That's right! I hope you're a rust monster, because you're going to eat my sword!"

The fat man is Commissioner Jacobus Flugg. His corruption matches his corpulence, and he is firmly in the (very large) pocket of Sand Net. The woman is Thel Achillia, and the man in full plate is Sand Net

boss and arena champion Volpone Venazzi. A character who makes a successful Spot check (DC 15) spies the Veins platinum championship helm underneath Volpone's chair. These three are auditioning potential new gladiators.

Commissioner Jacobus Flugg, Male Human Ari5: CR 4; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 7 in. tall); HD 5d8+5; hp 29; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 10, flat-footed 13; Atk +5 melee (1d6+1/crit 19–20, masterwork short sword); AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +5; Str 12, Dex 11, Con 13, Int 14, Wis 13, Cha 15.

Skills: Appraise +10, Bluff +10, Diplomacy +6, Forgery +6, Gather Information +10, Innuendo +5, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (local) +6, Listen +5, Sense Motive +5, Spot +3. *Feats:* Dodge, Great Fortitude, Skill Focus (Bluff).

Possessions: *+1 glamered leather,* masterwork short sword, dagger, assorted jewelry (235 gp), 15 pp, 43 gp.

When she sees Rufillius subtly signalling her and gesturing toward the PCs, Thel vaults over the marble rail and joins the PCs in the stands, away from Volpone and his toady Flugg. Encourage the PCs to roleplay this encounter. Thel direly needs saviors, but she is suspicious of everyone and fears the PCs might be Sand Net infiltrators. She willingly shares the following public information with anyone:

• "It's true. Gladiators are dying, and no one knows why. My stable, Achillia, has been especially hard hit."

• "I can offer you an independent contract. There is a 250 gold piece signing bonus." Until they earn her trust, PCs are not allowed to train in the arena or Achillia facilities.

• "The rules are simple: Any weapons, any spells. Nothing cast before the match. Quarter must be granted when asked. Get *raise dead* insurance from the clerics." Thel discusses all of the rules listed in "Appendix I: Arena Rules" if asked, but she also tells the PCs they need to show up for orientation to get a full briefing.

If the PCs earn her trust, Thel divulges more information and in fact begs the PCs' aid. At your option, Rufillius might have observed the Sand Net factors loosening the manticore's cage lock in **Event 1**, and he vouches for the PCs' heroism. In this case, Thel automatically trusts the PCs.

Otherwise, PCs can win Thel's confidence by capturing rather than killing Gar in **Event 1** (the manticore's contract is a sizable investment for her stable), by succeeding at a Diplomacy check (DC 25), or by catching a Sand Net factor or gladiator while he is committing some crime (there is an opportunity for this in **Event 3**). Once she trusts them, Thel tells the PCs the following:

• "Please help us investigate. We have to stop the deaths." Thel offers a 1,000 gp reward for information leading to the capture of whoever or whatever is responsible for the deaths. She also offers standard pay as a gladiator (see below).

• "I need someone on the inside. Many areas are restricted to the pros only, and you need to go to those areas for your investigation. Don't worry, we'll make an Achillia gladiator out of you. The best in the Veins." Thel increases the signing bonus to 400 gp and offers a 250 gp cut at the gate on each match featuring the PCs. If a PC bargains and succeeds at a Diplomacy check (DC 20), Thel increases the gate cut to 300 gp.

• "Poor Short Fang, he's one of the arena orphans now. His mentor, the Golden Shambler, died last week. Short Fang can't bring himself to take off the Shambler's training belt."

• "My father was mur . . . he died while delivering the gate's take to the bank two years ago. The stable came was my inheritance, along with my family's majority share in the arena."

• "Technically, I'm still under contract myself. But I haven't fought in a year." Thel has been occupied with running the stable and the Veins, and she found herself rattled by the battle with and death of Arxus.

Thel has another, unvoiced motive. Her stable is about to collapse, and if she does not get fresh recruits, she faces bankruptcy and the loss of her stake in the arena. A PC who succeeds at an opposed Sense Motive check (DC 20) learns that Thel is holding something back. A Diplomacy check (DC 15) encourages her to reveal that her family's stable is in need of aid to avoid an unpleasant business decision. Although Thel won't reveal it here, this "unpleasant business decision" would almost certainly mean her death: If she loses her majority share, Sand Net will take over the arena. Because Thel is still under contract, she would be forced to fight in a series of increasingly dangerous matches until Sand Net succeeded in conveniently and legally exterminating her.

A final successful Sense Motive check (DC 25) lets the PCs determine that Thel strongly suspects Sand Net. She doesn't say anything about her suspicion because she wants to avoid biasing the PCs.

Once the PCs agree to become gladiators and investigate the fatalities, they must audition. Thel escorts them onto the arena floor to face the other two partial owners of the Veins.

Commissioner Flugg speaks with flapping lips and arms, and the occasional flying saliva drop stains the sand like rain. "You can't just traipse out and fight! Look at me. Rakkel Tinkswatter died. Do you care? No,

because who in Pandemonium is Rakkel Tinkswatter? But if I say your mom died, then you'll be madder than a beholder in a shampoo waterfall. Why? Because you know your mom. Understand? Look at me. The audience has to know you, to know your character, before they care about you. When they care about you, they pay good gold to see you fight.

The audition consists of two events:

The first is Grudge Building. Each PC must stand in front of the judges' table and emote, cursing the heavens, tearing his clothes, and making it clear how much he wants to rip out his opponent's liver. There is no crowd to excite, but each PC passes if he succeeds at a Perform (drama) check (DC 11) against an imaginary opponent (feel free to allow creative characters to use other Perform checks in place of Perform—drama). An Intimidate, Diplomacy, or Bluff check (DC 11) also suffices. Encourage the players to roleplay this and give appropriate skill check bonuses; a PC who works hard at Grudge Building can earn a bonus on his check equal to half his character level. A PC who passes this part of the test gets to choose his own stage name; a PC who fails gets a stage name assigned by Commissioner Flugg (for example, an arcane caster might be Moon Pants Morris; a divine caster Daring, Deadly, and Divine, or Triple D; a fighter could be dubbed Eric the Giant; and a rogue, Supersly).

The second and last part of the audition is gladiatorial combat.

Creatures: Flugg locks the party in a 30-foot × 30-foot square paddock with one dire boar and one dire lion (trained not to attack each other). The PCs pass the test by reducing both beasts' hit points to 15 or lower. If the PCs need outside aid before they can do this, they fail the test. Failing, they are still accepted into the arena as gladiators, but only after Thel bribes Flugg. Consequently, Thel cannot afford to give the PCs their signing bonuses.

If the PCs have questions about the arena's rules, Flugg and Thel answer them honestly and completely (see "Appendix I" for details).

Dire Boar: hp 52; *Monster Manual* 57.

Dire Lion: hp 60; *Monster Manual* 57.

Tactics: The dire boar and dire lion are trained to flank one opponent and ignore others. The dire lion uses its pounce ability on one random PC to start combat. The dire boar then circles to attack that same PC from behind. Unless a single blow causes one of them more than 20 points of damage (in which case they both focus on the perpetrator of this mighty blow), the two animals relentlessly attack the same opponent until he falls.

Thel Achillia, Female Human Ftr4: CR 4; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 9 in. tall); HD 4d10+12; hp 40; Init +5; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 11, flat-footed 15; Atk +9 melee (1d6+5/crit 18–20, scimitar); AL LG; SV Fort +7, Ref +2, Will +4; Str 16, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 11, Wis 13, Cha 12.

Skills: Bluff +4, Climb +6, Diplomacy +4, Handle

ARENA RECORDS AND HELMS

The Veins Championship Helms are:

The Platinum Veins: This winged helm is currently held by Volpone Venazzi. Forged of hammered platinum with channeled rubies inset to evoke the image of the Veins's famous marble striations, it is the most prestigious helm in the arena. It can only be won in one-on-one combat, and only a gladiator who has amassed 15 Fame points can challenge for it. Volpone forces Commissioner Flugg to do everything in his power to prevent a fighter from reaching 15 Fame points, but if one does, Volpone is honor-bound to face him in one-on-one combat with the helm on the line. According to arena rules, Volpone need only defend his helm against any given challenger once every three months. Also according to arena rules, the champion is allowed to dictate the Spices (if any) of the championship match; the challenger has no say in the matter. Because of his Blind-fighting and Improved Bull Rush feats, Volpone often chooses Basilisk Matches and Ankheg Pit Matches for title defense bouts. Winning this helm earns a PC 2 Fame points.

The Marble Helm: This helm is awarded to the winner of the year's Marble Cage event. Currently, it is worn by Severus Tulero. It is gold with a marble intaglio in the shape of the arena on the front. Winning this helm earns a PC 1 Fame point.

The Garnet Helms: These helms are worn by the Team Champions of the arena. The helms are vacant right now, because Thel's Achillia team has lost too many members to bloodrush. It is possible that the commissioner will put the Garnet Helms up in a tournament involving the PCs, Team Tongue, the Hurk brothers, and the Diving Duo (Gar and the Dreadwood Wyvern). Winning these helms earns each member of the team 1 Fame Point.

The following are records in the Veins.

Fastest Knockout: Mountain Morasso and Volpone Venazzi. Tied at two blows.

Consecutive Solo Wins: Mountain Morasso. Seven.

Consecutive Team Wins: Sand Net Prisms. Four.

Wins in One Day: Mountain Morasso. Four.

Consecutive Matches Unharmed: Severus Tulero. Three.

Most Spice Wins in One Day: Hektor Achillia. Three.

Most Spells Absorbed Without Losing: Kitrina Bolt. Seventeen. Five were *feeblemind,* and one such dweomer finally worked, but it was a basilisk match and the scroll-carrying mage Kitrina was fighting caught the lizard's gaze just as he was about to finish her off.

Animal +4, Ride +4. *Feats:* Blind-Fight, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Quick Draw, Weapon Focus (scimitar), Weapon Specialization (scimitar).

Possessions: +2 leather, small steel shield with Achillia intaglio, masterwork scimitar, two hematite armbands (20 gp each), belt pouch with 50 gp, deed to The Veins. Thel once possessed the gladiatorial gear accumulated by her line over a century of pit fighting, but she has sold all save her father's armor to stave off Sand Net. She never lets the deed out of her sight for fear of theft.

Volpone Venazzi, Male Human Ftr5/Rog2: CR 7; Medium-size Humanoid (6 ft. 2 in. tall); HD 5d10+10 plus 2d6+4; hp 55; Init +4; Spd 30 ft.; AC 18, touch 10, flat-footed 18; Atk +11/+6 melee (2d6+6/crit 19–20, masterwork greatsword); SA sneak attack +1d6; SQ evasion; AL NE; SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +2; Str 17, Dex 11, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 8, Cha 15.

Skills: Appraise +6, Bluff +9, Climb +8, Diplomacy +6, Intimidate +11, Jump +9, Pick Pocket +2, Sense Motive +6, Swim +8, Tumble +2. *Feats:* Blind-fight, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Initiative, Improved Unarmed Strike, Iron Will, Weapon Focus (greatsword),Weapon Specialization (greatsword).

Possessions: full plate, masterwork greatsword, two gaudy gold medallions (300 gp each), Veins championship helm, personal copy of Sand Net account logs.

Volpone tucks his medallions under his armor when he fights, otherwise he doffs his breastplate and opens his tunic to bare the flashy jewelry. Volpone's personal copy of the Sand Net account logs could be used to prove that he did, in fact, pay for the killing of Thel's father two years ago.

Development: After the audition, the PCs can take several paths:

If they were hired by Achillia as either full gladiators or independent contractors, Volpone sends Stick and Drag after them (see **Event 3**). At some point, the PCs should attend the Gladiator's Orientation (**Event 4**).

The PCs likely want to talk to the locals and begin their investigation; consult the "Gather Information (**Event Block A**)" sidebar for results. While tracking down rumors, the PCs probably encounter Trixa Hatchet (**Event 5**). Ultimately, the PCs stand in the arena for their first battle (**Event 6**).

3. PURSE STINGS— THE BAZAAR (AREA V6)

Volpone Venazzi does not want stable Achillia to recover. Accordingly, he orders Stick and Drag to tail the PCs after their audition and plant two tiny monstrous scorpions in each PCs' backpack or belt pouch. Stick and Drag must make a Pick Pockets check opposed by the PCs' Spot checks to place the scorpions.

If the factors are successful, the scorpions strike the next time a PC takes an object out of his pack. If the PCs spot the two villains, Stick and Drag fight until reduced to 10 hp, then flee. If captured, Stick and Drag confess after an Intimidate check (DC 15) that they are from Sand Net and were sent to kill the PCs. They maintain Sand Net's innocence in the case of the gladiator deaths.

Creatures: The scorpions are angry at being tussled about and sting repeatedly.

Tiny Monstrous Scorpion (2): hp 4; *Monster Manual* 208.

Stick, Male Human Ftr2/Rog1: CR 3; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 7 in. tall); HD 2d10+2 plus 1d6+1 plus 3; hp 30; Init +4; Spd 30 ft; AC 12, touch 10, flatfooted 12; Atk +6 melee (1d6+3/crit 19–20, short sword); SA sneak attack +1d6; AL NE; SV Fort +6, Ref +2, Will –1; Str 16, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +7, Hide +3, Jump +7, Move Silently +3, Pick Pocket +3. *Feats:* Blind-Fight, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Toughness, Weapon Focus (short sword).

Possessions: leather armor, short sword, Sand Net garnet signet ring (10 gp), pouch with 21 gp.

Drag, Male Human Rog2/Ftr1: CR 3; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 6 in. tall); HD 1d10+1 plus 2d6+2 plus 3; hp 23; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 11, flat-footed 12; Atk +5 melee (1d6+2/crit 19–20, short sword); SA sneak attack +1d6; SQ evasion; AL NE; SV Fort +3, Ref +6, Will –1; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 9, Cha 11.

Skills: Bluff +3, Gather Information +2, Hide +5, Listen +1, Move Silently +5, Pick Pocket +6, Sense Motive +1, Spot +1. *Feats:* Alertness, Lightning Reflexes, Toughness, Weapon Focus (short sword).

Possessions: leather armor, short sword, two Sand Net garnet earrings (10 gp), Sand Net garnet signet ring (10 gp), pouch with 21 gp. Only one of the earrings is Drag's; the other he stole from Stick.

4. PRIZE FIGHTER'S ORIENTATION— LOCKER ROOMS (AREA B5)

The locker rooms underneath the arena floor are packed with aspiring gladiators. Three men who look like they could be brothers are playfully roughhousing on the wooden bench in front of you, a silent woman in orange robes sits in the lotus position on the floor to your right, and many other hopefuls are packed with you into the room. In front, the Commissioner confers with Volpone and a gnarled old man with a bent spine. When he's

done, he stands up on a gear trunk at the front of the room.

"Hello. Welcome to the Veins! Look at me. Do you think you're here because you're the best? Ha! You whelps don't even know the rules yet. A kobold with filth fever and no hands could shame you in the arena. Now, look at me. If somebody asks for quarter, you give it. There's no money in death! Unless you're a cleric. But that's a separate operation. The point is, if we run out of gladiators, we run out of business. You get that? Good. Look at me. We're going to go through all the rules one by one so even a bunch of girallons like you can understand them."

The commissioner explains the rules presented in "Appendix I: Arena Rules." He answers any questions the PCs might have and expansively insults them for having them. ("My dog could learn these rules faster than you, and I sold half his brain to a mind flayer last year.")

Creatures: The gnarled old man with the bent spine is Paramezzus (see area **V8** for statistics). He knows that the PCs are working for Achillia, and he has decided to make their lives in the arena just a little bit harder. Using a *mage hand* spell, he tips over a bottle of alchemist's fire disguised as muscle tonic right at the PCs' feet. The bench in front of the PCs catches on fire, and anyone staying on it for another round has a chance to catch on fire as well (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 86). A PC who succeeds at a Spot check opposed by Paramezzus's Hide roll (Paramezzus gets a +5 circumstance bonus to his check due to the number of people in the room between himself and the characters) sees the alchemist casting a spell. No one else witnesses this, however (at least, no one willing to talk), and the Commissioner and Volpone prevent the PCs from questioning or laying hands on Paramezzus, commanding the rest of the neophyte gladiators to hold back the PCs if necessary.

The PCs also have to deal with the Hurk brothers, who were sitting on the bench in front of them (see **Event 6** for statistics). If the PCs do not succeed at a Diplomacy check (DC 10), the enraged Hurks whirl on the PCs and attack them through the flames. After 2 rounds of combat, the Commissioner and Volpone order the other gladiators to separate the PCs and the Hurks.

Meanwhile, the Commissioner acknowledges it was just an accident but still fines the PCs the cost of the bench (13 gp). He also takes the opportunity to insult them some more.

Development: After attending orientation, the characters are cleared for arena fighting. They can go sniff out more clues in the arena (see the "Gather Information—**Event Block A**" table), they might encounter Trixa (**Event 5**), they can face independent gladiators in one-on-one matches (see the "Independent Gladiators" sidebar), or they can head straight to their first arena battle, which the Commissioner makes certain is against the Hurk brothers (**Event 6**).

BLOODRUSH

Bloodrush is a melange of herbs packed into tight netting. This poultice is pressed to the user's neck, and the drug seeps through the net and skin into the blood. Ten minutes after applying the bloodrush, the user must make a Will save (DC 14) or rage as a barbarian (+4 to Constitution, +4 to Strength, +2 to will saves, and –2 on AC). Success indicates the user manages to avoid raging, but is shaken for a number of rounds equal to the amount of time he would have raged had he failed the save. Of course, a user can voluntarily fail this save. After the drug wears off, the user is fatigued (–2 to Strength, –2 to Dexterity, can't charge or run). Moreover, when the bloodrush wears off, the character must make a Fortitude save (DC 18) or suffer 1 point of permanent Constitution drain. Paramezzus has been using the delayed effect and nonmagical nature of the drug to smuggle it past the arena's referees, and he intends to keep doing so until every gladiator in the arena has unwittingly poisoned him or herself.

Bloodrush is addictive. Upon initial exposure, a character must make a successful Fortitude save (DC 14) or become addicted to the drug. Addicted characters take 1 point of permanent Constitution drain each day unless they succeed at a Fortitude saving throw (DC 14) or are satiated by another dose. Addicted characters are satiated each time they take bloodrush; doing so staves off withdrawal symptoms. After each satiation period ends, the character goes into withdrawal and the DC to resist the effects of addiction increases by +5. So a character who becomes addicted to bloodrush must succeed at a Fortitude save every day or take 1 point of permanent Constitution drain. As long as he continues to use bloodrush every two days, his saving throw DC is 14. If he stops taking bloodrush for more than two days, the DC of the addiction saving throw increases to 19. If he starts using it again, the DC drops back to 14.

A character who makes two successful Fortitude saving throws in a row has fought off the addiction. These lucky individuals recover, although the Constitution drain still doesn't heal normally, and take no further damage.

Greater restoration or *heal* negate the ability drain and forced recovery. *Remove disease* forces immediate recovery, but the victim might still have Constitution drain.

Cost: 100 gp; *DC to Create:* 25.

5. THE RED AND YELLOW, PART I—BATHS (AREA B4) (EL 6)

A young woman in well-cut armor and a short, red leather skirt beckons you into one of the bathing alcoves. A dark, brooding bodyguard watches you while Trixa strikes a pose. "Do you like what you see? Of course you do. So do the fans. I'm a manager, and my name is Trixa Hatchet. At 20 gold pieces per match I'll pay for myself."

Appearing in a match with Trixa gives the PCs one additional Fame point and a +2 on Perform (drama), Diplomacy, Intimidate, or Bluff checks when Grudge Building or entering the arena dramatically (see "Appendix I: Arena Rules"). Trixa is currently managing Hamidou Mombasa, who doubles as her bodyguard (see the "Independent Gladiators" sidebar for statistics). She is looking to take on additional gladiators, however, because like her previous two clients, Hamidou is suffering from ill health (caused by bloodrush abuse, but neither Hamidou nor Trixa knows that).

Trixa is happy to hear of the PCs investigation into the gladiator deaths. She has a vested interest; after all, if the gladiators all die, she has no one to manage. She can tell the PCs three things: None of her gladiators worked for Sand Net; all her gladiators would do anything to win; and fans loved her fighters, and no one she knows of hated them enough to kill them. If asked about a mint smell, Trixa remembers that yes, her gladiators all did often smell like mint after a match. She conjectured the smell originated with the cleaning fluids Commissioner Flugg uses on the arena. Like Thel, Trixa suspects that Sand Net is behind the gladiator deaths.

Hired or not, Trixa walks away blowing a Parthian kiss. Moments later, her father approaches the PCs.

A bald man in a yellow tunic with a matching yellow beard down to his moneybelt saunters out of the shadows. Two great, six-legged black cats flank him. Twin tentacles sprout from the cat's backs and end in rough pads covered with horny ridges.

"You like my daughter, eh? I'm afraid she underestimated her price. You'll find it can be very expensive to work with a wanted criminal. You see, Trixa has been picking flowers she shouldn't have, and the King would almost certainly throw anyone involved into the copper mines for a decade or two."

Creatures: This is Alfonse Drellus, Trixa's loathed father. A slimy operator who stalks his own daughter, he is jealous and possessive of her success. She wants nothing to do with him, but that only infuriates him further. He attempts to extort money from any PCs who hire her.

At first, Alfonse claims that Trixa is wanted in Plenith for stealing sapphire roses from the King's garden. The crime, he claims, is punishable by twenty years in the copper mines, and he will report the PCs as abettors unless they do not pay him 40 gp per match.

A successful Sense Motive check opposed by Alfonse's Bluff check reveals that Alfonse is lying. If caught in the lie, or if the PCs refuse to pay him, Alfonse tenses and attacks if provoked much further. Unless the PCs scare him with a successful Intimidate check (DC 20) or placate him with a successful Diplomacy check (DC 20), Alfonse sics the displacer beasts on them.

Alfonse Drellus, Male Human Ftr2: CR 2; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 10 in. tall); HD 2d10+4; hp 19; Init +4; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 10, flatfooted 14,; Atk +3 melee (1d8/crit 19–20, longsword); AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +0, Will –1; Str 11, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 12.

Skills: Bluff +3, Climb +4, Handle Animal +4, Jump +3; *Feats:* Endurance, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (longsword).

Possessions: chain shirt, longsword, 35 pp, lapis lazuli locket with miniature painting of Trixa at age four (250 gp, but Alfonse would liquidate his considerable holdings to recover the locket, should he become separated from it).

Displacer Beasts (2): hp 51, 50; *Monster Manual* 59.

Trixa Hatchet, Female Human Rog3: CR 3; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 10 in. tall); HD 3d6+6; hp 18; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 10; Atk +1 melee (1d6–1/crit 19–20, short sword); SA sneak attack +2d6; SQ evasion, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC); AL CG; SV Fort +2, Ref +6, Will +4; Str 9, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 11, Wis 13, Cha 15.

Skills: Bluff +8, Diplomacy +8, Forgery +7, Hide +9, Listen +3, Move Silently +9, Perform (drama) +10, Pick Pockets +7, Sense Motive +7, Spot +7. *Feats:* Alertness, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Perform—drama).

Possessions: chain shirt, short sword, red leather skirt, gold toe rings (4 gp each), ruby and gold couatl hair pin (120 gp).

Alfonse has trained these beasts and won their loyalty, but they belong to the arena. An arena employee finding them in the halls simply assumes they escaped their pens and herds them back.

Tactics: Alfonse seeks to stay out of the fight and cowers behind his displacer beasts. If attacked, he answers with his longsword while trying to maneuver to a safe place; if brought below 10 hp, Alfonse calls off his beasts and retreats. Similarly, the beasts don't fight to the death for Alfonse. They are dimly intelligent, and at 15 hp, they retreat, even running to arena employees who prevent the PCs from killing the expensively contracted beasts.

Development: Alfonse should become another suspect for the PCs. He is a red herring, but his hatred for his daughter and his bloodthirstiness make him a creepy force the PCs cannot discount. Whether or not he gets his money, Alfonse leaves the PCs with this thought: "You might have need of my services soon. Bad things happen to gladiators that I don't like." Alfonse is trying to capitalize on the recent gladiator deaths to give his threats more weight. However, just as is the case with his daughter's career, he is trying to leech power from a phenomenon for which he is not at all responsible. For her part, Trixa refuses to discuss her father, except to deny his charges, until the DM judges it time to run "The Red and Yellow, Part II" (see **Event 13**).

With this new suspect on their list, the PCs might continue to interrogate citizens in the arena (see the "Gather Information—**Event Block A**" sidebar). They might also attend the Prize Fighter's Orientation if they have not yet done so (see **Event 4**), they might fight in individual gladiator matches (see the "Independent Gladiators" sidebar), or they might move on to their first arena battle (see **Event 6**).

6. FIRST BLOOD (PLOT)—THE ARENA FLOOR (AREA V2) (EL 7)

The PCs' first battle is a four-man match versus the Hurk Brothers and their pet hell hound. When they are ready or the DM deems it time, they should report to the locker room.

The mood in the locker room is tense before your first battle. Steam from the baths hangs in the air, and you can hear the Hurk brothers, your opponents, hooting and hollering in the hall outside, psyching themselves up.

Suddenly the ceiling shakes as the bronteum thunders through the arena. The match is about to start!

Gathering at the arena entrance tunnel, the Hurk brothers stare you down. The feral dog that fights with them curls his upper lip at you, but you can't hear his growls because the cheering in the arena is too loud.

The Hurks enter first, sprinting out onto the sands. Jeb and Rebus hold hands in the fashion of their "Hurkules" finishing move, and Squirt runs alongside the hound. At the center of the sands, Squirt turns to you and points you out to the dog while making a chomping motion with his teeth.

Then another smoke cloud billows in front of you, the thunder cracks, and more music resonates from the bronteum. The fans are stomping in the bleachers, demanding your entrance.

Don't forget to have the PCs make rolls to enter the arena dramatically and to build Grudges against the Hurks on the arena floor before the match (see "Appendix I: Arena Rules"). The Hurks' catch phrase is "Don't scorch 'em too much Sparky; momma likes 'em pink on the inside!"

Creatures: Sparky the hell hound has been hand-fed by the Hurks since it was a puppy, and it has grown up hale and loyal.

Hell Hound: hp 33; *Monster Manual* 118.

Squirt Hurk, Male Human Clr4: CR 4; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 10 in. tall); HD 4d8+4; hp 25; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 10, flat-footed 16; Atk + 4 melee (1d6+1, light mace); SA spells, turn undead 4/day; AL N; SV Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +9; Str 12, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 16, Cha 13.

Skills: Heal +10, Knowledge (religion) +3, Listen +5, Spellcraft +2, Spot +5. *Feats:* Alertness, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes.

Spells Prepared (5/4/3, base save DC = 13 + spell level): 0—*cure minor wounds* ×3, *detect magic* ×2; 1st—*command, divine favor, inflict light wounds**, *sanctuary*; 2nd—*bull's strength**, *hold person* ×2.

*Domain spell. *Domains:* Destruction (smite 1/day—+4 attack and +4 damage); Strength (feat of strength 1/day—+4 Strength for 1 round).

Possessions: breastplate, buckler, light mace, two turquoise scarab pins (40 gp each), pouch with 29 gp.

Jeb and Rebus Hurk, Male Human Ftr3 (2): CR 3; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 10 in. tall); HD 3d10+6 (currently 3d10+3); hp 30 (currently maximum 27); Init +4; Spd 30 ft; AC 17, touch 10, flatfooted 17; Atk +5 melee (1d8+1/crit 19–20, longsword); AL N; SV Fort +5 (currently +4), Ref +1, Will +0; Str 13, Dex 10, Con 14 (currently 12), Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 12.

Skills: Bluff +3, Climb +5, Handle Animal +4, Intimidate +3, Ride +3; *Feats:* Cleave, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (longsword).

Possessions: breastplate, longsword, large wooden shield, 1 gp, five aleskins of homebrewed "J&R Special" liquor.

Tactics: Jeb and Rebus use bloodrush before this match; see the sidebar for its effects.

Jeb and Rebus are the older brothers and refuse to follow their more talented younger brother's lead. They blindly try to flank the characters no matter what Squirt is doing. They also herd the PCs into one clump so the hell hound's breath weapon blasts for maximum effect. Squirt tries to keep his brothers alive and uses his *sanctuary* spell to avoid attacks. When the Hurks have an opponent in trouble, they attempt their finishing move, the Hurkules. The Hurkules (pronounced HERK-yoo-lees) consists of Jeb and Rebus linking arms and charging with their swords pointed forward in their outside hands (Jeb is left-handed). The one time they cooperate with Squirt is when he has *held* an opponent; they immediately attempt to skewer *held* foes with a Hurkules coup de grace. They surrender the match rather than pay *raise dead* fees; thus they cry quarter if wounded below 15 hit points.

Development: The PCs can earn a substantial number of Fame points in the match that will aid them in their investigation. Note also that the Hurk brothers have never won a gladiatorial match, so if the PCs lose the match, they lose at least 1 Fame point (see "Appendix I: Arena Rules").

The PCs can learn the following clues from this match:

- The Hurk Brothers smell strongly of mint. Wisdom check (DC 10).
- The mint smell is from a faraja leaf. Profession (herbalism) check (DC 25). Faraja leaves come from the faraja plant, which has a pulpy stem, white flowers in the spring, and oval leaves. The faraja leaves have no special qualities in and of themselves, save for their strong minty smell. Paramezzus uses this herb to make the bloodrush, but the characters probably must consult Fra Lorenzo, a local herbalist, to make this connection (see the "Gather Information (**Event Blocks B and C**)" sidebar for information on Fra Lorenzo).
- The odor of mint does not cling to the hell hound. Wisdom check (DC 10).
- The Hurk Brothers are Sand Net gladiators. Gather Information check (DC 10).
- If the combat lasts more than 6 rounds, Jeb and Rebus flag noticeably. Wisdom check (DC 20).
- The Hurk Brothers spent a good deal of time with the physician Paramezzus before the match. Gather Information check (DC 20).

From here, the PCs can continue their investigation on the "Gather Information (**Event Block A**)" table. If they have not yet met Trixa, they might also encounter her (see **Event 5**). When you judge the time is right to proceed, the PCs move to **Block B**, which begins with "Every Girl Loves a Romantic Ooze, Part I" (**Event 7**).

7. EVERY GIRL LOVES A ROMANTIC OOZE, PART I—LOCKER ROOMS (AREA B5) (EL 5)

This can occur whenever the PCs confer with Thel.

> As you speak with your patron, a fellow prize fighter passes and gives the traditional "Hail, Thel!" salute. Thel answers, "Hail . . . Gaahhh!" as a gash is ripped in her skin from her ear to her jaw. You see no assailants.

Thel is under attack from two phantom fungi trained by the ghost of Arxus Nod, who, in a love as

enduring as it is twisted, is attempting to kill Thel and re-grow her as an ooze like himself (in fact, Arxus is not even an ooze, he is a ghost possessing a black pudding, but he believes himself to be the pudding—see **Event 15**).

After the characters spirit Thel to safety or extirpate the fungi, Thel can tell them that ooze and fungus attacks like this one commenced around the same time as the gladiator deaths.

Creatures: The phantom fungi have orders to attack Thel, but neither is especially intelligent. Ultimately, each fungus attacks whoever last caused it damage.

Phantom Fungus: hp 15; *Monster Manual* 149.

Development: The PCs likely suspect that Thel's assailant and the force behind the gladiator deaths are one and the same. This is not true, and PC investigators who spend time interrogating the arena regulars about the attacks can discover this (use the "Gather Information—**Event Blocks B and C**" sidebar. Truthfully, it is of no consequence if the PCs are confused about who is attacking Thel personally at this point; this subplot becomes much clearer to them when you run "Every Girl Loves a Romantic Ooze, Part II" (**Event 15**).

After this attack, the PCs might question the regulars, Grudge Build in an interview with Diamond Dharina (see **Event 8**), fight the Mountain (see **Event 9**), engage in some one-on-one gladiator matches (see the "Independent Gladiator" sidebar for statistics), or even head into their next arena battle (see **Event 10**).

SPICE ON THE SAND

Any match's rules can be altered arbitrarily by the commissioner or by the agreement of both gladiators or teams of gladiators. The locals call this "putting spice on the sand." See "Appendix I: Arena Rules" for basic match rules.

Basilisk Match: A muzzled basilisk is set loose among the gladiators. It cannot bite, but its gaze remains deadly. The gladiators are forbidden to attack or touch the basilisk, and the combat must proceed around the lizard. See the *Dungeon Master's Guide,* page 77, for gaze attack rules.

Ankheg Pit Match: For this match, two special 10-foot-square pits, 20 feet deep, are installed to replace the trap doors. At the bottom of each pit are two ankhegs, which are trained not to attack anything on the arena floor. Anything that falls into their pit, however, is fair game. Other than that, the rules for the match are standard.

Caltrop Match: A bag of caltrops is taped under every spectator's seat before the match. During combat, Diamond Dharina calls out a section number, and the fans in that section go wild as they get to toss their caltrops onto the sand. This results in one 20-foot by 20-foot square of the arena floor being filled with caltrops each round.

Gauntlet Match: Especially for stable factors, the winner of this match is the first rogue to run through a gauntlet of three traps. Roll three times on **Table 4–11** on page 118 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* to determine the traps. For harder gauntlets, use **Table 4–12** or even **Table 4–7** on page 117 (but be warned, **Table 4–7** lists extremely powerful magic traps). If one factor is killed or disabled, the other one must still disable all his traps to win.

Grappling Match: No weapons and no offensive spells are allowed in a this match. In fact, the only attacks allowed are grapples, and the first gladiator to pin his opponent twice wins. Defensive spells or items that target only the caster are allowed. After each pinfall, the gladiators return to their starting positions.

Platform Match: Two 5-foot-square platforms are raised 10 feet high and 30 feet apart in the arena. The first opponent to touch the arena sands loses. This match is popular among mages.

Random Weapon or Random Spell Match: Weapon racks stocked with random weapons are dragged onto the sands for this match. After at most 2 rounds and at least 1 round with any given weapon, a gladiator must draw and wield a new random weapon (roll on **Table 8–11** in the *Dungeon Master's Guide,* page 184, to find the next random weapon on the rack). In a Random Spell Match, a gladiator rolls randomly among the spell schools every 2 rounds, and she is only allowed to cast spells from that school until she rolls again. If she does not have any spells of the appropriate school memorized, she cannot cast that round.

Ziggurat Match: A seven-step ziggurat is placed in the center of the sands (each step is 5 feet wide and 5 feet high, the top is a 10-foot square). The winner of the match is the gladiator who stays on the top step for 3 consecutive rounds.

Flying Match: Each participating gladiator has a *fly* spell cast on him or her before the match. Gladiators who fly higher than the *antimagic* moat (40 feet) are disqualified; gladiators who fly through the moat fall—a popular tactic among veterans of the arena is to bull rush or toss flying opponents through the *antimagic* wall.

Tilting Floor: Massive bellows are brought into the lower part of the arena and attached to the bottom of the arena floor. Every 1d6 rounds during the match, the floor tilts in a random direction (use one of the grenadelike weapon scatter diagrams on page 68 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*). Gladiators must make Balance checks (DC 15) to keep their feet. Those who fail slide quickly to the edge of the arena, taking 1d6 points of damage for every 20 feet slid.

Hidden Pits: Ten-foot by 10-foot pits (Search, DC 20) are hidden around the floor of the arena. Characters must make Reflex saves (DC 20) each time they step into a trapped square or fall 20 feet into the arena's lower level. Gladiators who fall must make their way back to the stairs and up into the arena again to continue in the fight; they can also surrender if they don't wish to continue.

8. DIAMOND DHARINA INTERVIEW—VEINS ARENA FLOOR (AREA V2) (EL 7)

One of the arena announcers, a female dwarf with the name of Diamond Dharina and the shape of a lumpy sling bullet, spreads her arms in a gesture of inclusive harmony. Visceral boos rain down from the crowd as crimson *dancing lights* highlight her ruddy mien. "We're all friends here, aren't we, my dearies?"

Between matches in a two-out-of-three grappling match, Diamond Dharina hosts a Grudge Building show. The PCs get five times their Fame points in gold if they agree to appear, and a second five times their Fame points in gold if they make successful Grudge Building checks while on stage. They also gain an extra Fame point if they roll a higher Grudge Building check than their next opponents, Team Tongue (see "Appendix I: Arena Rules" for Grudge Building checks, and see **Event 10** for Team Tongue's statistics).

Note that if the characters roll higher than a 20 on their Grudge Building check, they insult Team Tongue so well that the yuan-ti and his cohorts leap over Diamond Dharina and attack the PCs immediately. This brawl gives the PCs an additional Fame point if they win, but it also causes the commissioner to fine the PCs 50 gp each for fighting outside the arena floor.

Creatures: The PCs can smell mint on Niggles and Dunlop but not on Severus (Wisdom check, DC 10). Paramezzus feared the intelligent yuan-ti would see through his bloodrush scheme and did not offer his brewbag to Severus.

Tactics: If Team Tongue attacks during the Diamond Dharina show, they simply fight until one of their number is at half hit points. Then they flee to the locker room, where Severus prepares for the real match based on what he just learned of the PCs.

The real match, a battle between Team Tongue and the PCs, occurs in **Event 10**. Until then, the PCs can investigate further (see the "Gather Information—**Event Blocks B and C**" sidebar), fight one-on-one matches (see the "Independent Gladiators" sidebar), or duel the Mountain (see **Event 9**).

9. THE MOUNTAIN—THE BATHS (AREA B4) (EL 2)

This encounter works best if the PCs come to it after some investigation reveals that the Mountain might have some valuable information. The "Gather Information (**Event Blocks B and C**)" sidebar has hooks that can bring the PCs into the event.

The hulk before you prompts you to recall Short Fang's hero-worship and his exaggerated tales of the Golden Shambler. The difference is that this man really is that big. Steam rising from the baths hangs around his head just like clouds hang around the summit of a real mountain.

Creatures: Mountain Morasso, the Living Legend, is looking to resurrect a career better left in the record books. He holds the records for fastest knockout, most wins in one day, and consecutive solo match wins, but now he lives on memories of his glory days.

The Mountain has heard of the PCs' quest for

information and is prepared to tell them some stories. However, he refuses to talk unless the PCs' best gladiator agrees to face him in a solo match. The Mountain agrees to any Spice the PC suggests. In fact, if any of the PCs question the Mountain's age or fitness, he becomes embarrassed and angry, and insists upon one of the more dangerous Spices to prove himself (at your option, probably a Poisoned Caltrop Match or an Ankheg Pit Match).

Once the PCs sign with the Commissioner for the match against the Mountain, he shares his information.

He claims that Volpone Venazzi once confided in the Mountain and adumbrated a plan to "knock off gladiators one-by-one to ruin the whole business, even my own Sand Net. Insurance money is better than gladiator money, that's sure as sand in your eye." Unfortunately for the PCs, this is completely made up and another example of the Mountain trying to feel important. PCs can make a Sense Motive check opposed by the Mountain's Bluff check (which is made at +2) to determine that he's not telling the truth.

Also unfortunate for the PCs is the fans' reaction to their match with the Mountain: Should the PC win, the crowd only boos the character for pulling the Living Legend off his pedestal. The PC in the match loses 3 Fame points.

Mountain Morasso, Male Human Ftr3: CR 3; Medium-size Humanoid (6 ft. 7 in. tall); HD 3d10–6; hp 16; Init +4; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 10, flat-footed 16; Atk +2 melee (1d8–1/crit 19–20, longsword); AL LG; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +2; Str 9, Dex 10, Con 7, Int 11, Wis 8, Cha 15.

Skills: Climb +5, Perform (drama) +5. *Feats:* Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Toughness ×2.

Possessions: chain shirt, large steel shield, longsword, 55 sp, scroll case containing certificates for his records in the Veins, scroll case containing ten charcoal portraits of Mountain Morasso that the gladiator can autograph and sell (or give away).

Development: If the PCs treat Morasso kindly and ask the right questions following the match, he can provide them with an important clue: he knows some gladiators have been using some sort of poultice that supposedly enhances their abilities in the ring. The Mountain thought about trying it a few times, he admits, after getting a sample from a now-deceased gladiator, but he has since stopped because he didn't feel a win while under the influence of the substance was an "honest" win. He subsequently tossed the poultice in the trash. "In fact," says the Mountain, "I think a good number of fighters who used those things now number among the dead." He doesn't know about the poultice's specific effects, but he can confirm a link between the use of the drug and the deaths of the gladiators.

After their match with the Mountain, the PCs might be ready for another battle, this time against Team Tongue (**Event 10**). If not, they can continue interrogating arena regulars (see the "Gather Information—**Event Blocks B and C**" sidebar), fight in an independent match or two (see the "Independent Gladiators" sidebar), or appear on the stage with Diamond Dharina if they have not yet done so (see **Event 8**).

10. TASTE TEST (PLOT)—VEINS ARENA FLOOR (AREA V2) (EL 7)

When the PCs are ready for their next battle, they should report to the locker room once more.

The crowd is even more raucous for your second battle. The locker room ceiling is vibrating in time with the fans' stomping feet. The snake-headed yuan-ti you must face is trying to stare you down from across the locker room; his glassy pupils break their gaze only when the blaring bronteum summons you to the arena entrance.

The stands are awash in human chaos. Fans wave at you, and someone—presumably an illusionist—projects a large silent image of your faces just below the Cloud Boxes. One fan is holding up a marriage proposal, but when the bronteum thunders again, your attention snaps back to the arena floor. A loud hiss crescendos in the arena, and at the climax of the sound, Team Tongue sprints into the ring.

Don't forget to have the PCs make rolls to enter the arena dramatically and to build Grudges against Team Tongue on the arena floor before the match (see "Appendix I: Arena Rules"). Team Tongue's catch phrases are, "Taste this!" and "Watch your tongue!"

Creatures: Team Tongue is named for its leader, Severus Tulero, a snake-headed yuan-ti halfblood. His two human partners have cut their own tongues to resemble Severus's forked one.

Severus Tulero, Yuan-ti Halfblood: hp 38; *Monster Manual* 190.

Dunlop, Male Human Rog2/Rgr1: CR 3; Medium-size Humanoid (6 ft. tall); HD 2d6+4 plus 1d10+2 (currently 2d6 plus 1d10); hp 22 (currently max 16); Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15, touch 12, flat-footed 15; Atk +4 melee (1d8+2/crit 19–20, masterwork longsword) and +2 melee (1d4+1/crit 19–20, dagger); SA sneak attack +1d6, favored enemy (human), two-weapon fighting ability; SQ evasion; AL CE; SV Fort +4 (currently +2), Ref +5, Will –1; Str 14, Dex 14, Con 14 (currently 11), Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +6, Diplomacy +6, Forgery +2, Gather Information +4, Handle Animal +2, Hide +7, Listen +3,

Move Silently +6, Ride +6, Spot +3, Use Magic Device +4. *Feats:* Alertness, Improved Initiative, Track, Weapon Focus (longsword).

Possessions: chain shirt, masterwork longsword, dagger, used bloodrush poultice, 43 gp.

Niggles, Male Human Rgr3: CR 3; Medium-size Humanoid (6 ft. 1 in. tall); HD 3d10+3 (currently 3d10–3); hp 28 (currently max 13); Init +4; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 14; Atk +5 melee (1d8+2/crit 19–20, masterwork longsword) and + 3 melee (1d4+1/crit 19–20, dagger); SA favored enemy (human), two-weapon fighting ability; AL CE; SV Fort +5 (currently +3), Ref +1, Will +3; Str 14, Dex 10, Con 12 (currently 9), Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 8.

Skills: Animal Empathy +4, Handle Animal +4, Intuit Direction +4, Jump +6, Ride +6, Swim +8. *Feats:* Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Track, Weapon Focus (longsword).

GATHER INFORMATION CHECKS (EVENT BLOCKS B AND C)

In the latter stages of the adventure, PCs making successful Gather Information checks can pick up the following rumors, lies, and clues:

• **DC 15:** Ignatio, bronteum operator—"My pipes and bells overlook the delivery entrance. There have been a lot of deliveries lately from Fra Lorenzo, an herbalist." See below for information on Fra Lorenzo. Also, a PC making a Diplomacy check (DC 10) and spending 25 gp can persuade Ignatio to compose a custom bronteum theme for the PC, and play that when the PC enters the arena. This gives a PC a +4 on any checks to enter the arena dramatically (see "Appendix I: Arena Rules").

• **DC 10:** Tippy Giblets, coconut saleswoman—"Ach, business has been slow. Slow for everyone, until I saw that Volpone Venazzi sashay through the bazaar with his medallions glowing gold on his chest. How is he grabbing such pretties in such hard times? I'd ask him, I would, if I could get him to give me the time of day."

• **DC 15:** Sir Levelyn Dodd, wandering minstrel—"When they asked us to play in the Veins, I was thrilled. But then when I saw what goes on in the locker rooms, I thought again. Have you seen the training those gladiators go through? It's a wonder they don't kill themselves."

• **DC 15:** Piggut, half-orc sandsweeper—"I found this in sand after Tongue match." Piggut gives the PCs a faraja leaf. If they take this to Fra Lorenzo, he can identify it.

• **DC 15:** Wilhemina Dodd, costume seamstress—"I was so busy with my husband's costumes that I forgot to finish Volpone's gladiator tunic. I thought he was going to flay me alive. That man is unstable."

• **DC 15:** Argosian Lutellus, animal handler—"That Alfonse Drellus creep is always sneaking our animals out and working with them. But at least he doesn't make the animals hoot and howl when he walks by, like that Paramezzus joker. Sheesh, you'd think that guy killed the Great Animal Spirit up in the sky, the way the critters jump when he comes around."

• **DC 15:** Giovanni Diometian, Cloud Box butler—"Working with all them rich folk, you get a nose for perfumes. Funny how the strongest smell isn't in the cloud boxes, it's the mint smell I catch on gladiators sometimes. Same smell hangs around that herbalist's booth out in the bazaar." Giovanni cannot supply Fra Lorenzo's name, but a diligent PC can find Lorenzo by making another successful Gather Information check (DC 15).

If a character directs his questions to a particular NPC, use the following results with either a Diplomacy, Gather Information, or Intimidate check:

Volpone Venazzi, crime lord: Volpone is an articulate brute. PCs might think to question him themselves, or they could be led to him by clues found in random Gather Information checks. His twelve-goon entourage (same statistics as Stick) brushes aside all questions from characters with less than 10 Fame points. If the PCs accumulate more than 13 Fame points and have not yet interviewed Volpone, he seeks them out, wanting to size up his new competition.

• **DC 10:** "How droll. You think I would kill my own gladiators? That's why you're not rich like me—because you're dense."

• **DC 15:** "Who hates gladiators? The Pacifists, of course. And Paramezzus, ever since Thel aerated his son in last year's Thunder Throwdown. And Trixa Hatchet's dad—he wants his daughter dead and the whole place rotting with her. But all of those people are pixie pants and couldn't hurt a millipede." The Pacifists are a group of peaceful protesters who frequently picket the arena. They might decide to heckle the PCs outside their lodging one night, causing them to be fatigued the next day (*Dungeon Master's Guide* page 84).

• **DC 20:** "All right, all right. Let me put it simply for you: Certain of my boys have been getting a boost. I don't know from whom, but it's powerful, and I suspect it's hurting them long term. Like you will be if you don't leave. Now."

Commissioner Flugg, corrupt official: Jacobus Flugg moves through the Veins like a fat little whirlwind spraying nonsense wherever he goes. He only stops for gladiators with a reputation (10 or more Fame points), and even then he is not normally helpful.

• "Of course I know who the killer is, I'm the Commissioner. Look at me. I will deal with this situation, and you will go bother someone else." This is his standard answer to any question of substance, and it is a lie.

• **DC 15:** The Commissioner relates the story of Thel, Arxus, and Paramezzus from the "Background" section if the PCs ask about any of those NPCs. The Commissioner speaks of Paramezzus's hatred for Thel and gladiators in general, but he does not fret because he considers the alchemist harmless.

• **DC 20:** "Don't touch that. Look at me. There is a connection between all the deaths. All the dead gladiators were veterans. No one new has died."

Possessions: chain shirt, masterwork longsword, dagger, map of lockers and owners in the locker rooms with the more affluent gladiators' lockers circled in green, 21 gp.

Tactics: Niggles and Dunlop use bloodrush before the match begins; see the sidebar for its effects.

Severus uses his aversion ability on the strongest fighter to keep him out of melee. He then attempts to poison an arcane caster. He targets other fighter types with *cause fear* and *suggestion*, uses *polymorph other* on other spellcasters, and uses the full-attack action with his scimitar and bite if he feels that he can stand toe-to-toe with his adversary (note that Severus is very smart and won't make stupid mistakes in combat). Team Tongue's finishing move is the Tongue Twister, which is executed when two team members flank a foe and swing their swords simultaneously, trying to spin the enemy in place.

Development: Niggles and Dunlop take bloodrush without Severus's knowledge. He has noticed their

GATHER INFORMATION CHECKS (EVENT BLOCKS B AND C) CONTINUED

• **Severus Tulero, yuan-ti halfblood gladiator:** Severus's teammates desert him after the match.

• **DC 10:** "I've got no team and no idea what you're talking about. I also have no idea what that bag of junk was. I did hear Niggles got it from someone inside the arena."

• **DC 20:** "All I know is that Niggles and Dunlop said it could have helped me fight better. I don't know what it was."

• **Hurk Brothers, good ol' boys:** The Hurk Brothers have been on bloodrush for several matches now.

• **DC 15:** "Our secret? It's not magic. That's all I'm saying. So it ain't illegal, because if it were illegal, they'd test for it, right?"

• **DC 20:** "May my mother come back from her grave—again—and rip your spine out if you ever say I told you, but yeah, there's a little extra oomph going around. You got to find it yourself, though, and if the man ain't selling you the stuff, I ain't selling you the man."

Paramezzus, arena alchemist: Paramezzus is a bent and crooked old man; he looks like a malformed homunculus, or like a doll that someone broke and put back together wrong. See area **V8** for Paramezzus's statistics.

• **DC 10:** "Yes, come see the corpses. The smell is formidable." Traces of bloodrush use disappear after death. *Speak with dead* spells are of limited use because the dead gladiators do not know why they died. If asked directly, a dead gladiator answers honestly about his bloodrush use. But it will not think to volunteer the information.

• **DC 10:** "Certainly I use fungus. Have you ever tried to make a tindertwig without firewort? But no, I don't know anything about this phantom fungus that attacked Her Holiness."

• "My son was a god! And she cut him down like a pig in the slaughterhouse. No one could have saved him. No one!" Paramezzus nearly goes mad when asked about his son or Thel. He will answer no more questions for a day.

• "I brew no such cataplasm." This is Paramezzus's answer to any interrogative concerning or alluding to bloodrush. As soon as possible after this question, Paramezzus bribes Commissioner Flugg to declare the party's next match a Caltrop Match against the Dreadwood Wyvern (see **Event 12**).

Fra Lorenzo, tattooed neighborhood herbalist: Fra Lorenzo (male human Exp5; Innuendo +5, Profession (herbalism) +8) is a special NPC. He can provide the link between Paramezzus and the gladiator deaths. Lorenzo mans a table in the bazaar, and the PCs might learn of this through Gather Information checks (see above). Unfortunately for the PCs, Fra Lorenzo harbors a justified fear of Paramezzus, and he hedges some of his answers.

Fra Lorenzo's back is a single large sunflower tattoo, with holy words of Pelor written in the petals.

• **DC 10:** "Indeed, I do sell a lot of faraja leaves. Yes, to someone at the Veins." See **Event 6** for details of the faraja leaves, which smell like mint and which Paramezzus uses to create the bloodrush. A PC who succeeds at a Sense Motive check (DC 15) realizes that Lorenzo is referring to Paramezzus, and another Sense Motive check (DC 20) reveals that Lorenzo suspects Paramezzus of brewing illegal concoctions with the herb.

• **DC 10:** "A plant always grows toward light. A man may grow toward darkness. A plant is predictable. A man is not. Why would Paramezzus need so many faraja leaves? We cannot know or predict. The leaves have a very strong smell, like mint; perhaps he is dabbling in perfumes?" Lorenzo is trying to communicate that he does not know if Paramezzus is good or evil, but that the possibility exists for either. In fact, he suspects that Paramezzus might be cooking up dangerous mélanges with his faraja leaves and his alchemical equipment. Another Sense Motive check (DC 15) reveals that Lorenzo considers it possible to create something deadly out of the materials he sells to Paramezzus.

• "Ah, you say that you took this poultice from Team Tongue? Let me see . . ." If the PCs bring Lorenzo the used poultice from **Event 10**, he informs them that it could be the source of the gladiators' deaths. He would like a fresh one to be sure. If the PCs do get a fresh one from Paramezzus's office (area **B1** and **Event 13**) or from the Golden Shambler's old belt in **Event 15**, Lorenzo can prove that Paramezzus and his bloodrush are behind the deaths of the gladiators. However, Lorenzo still fears Paramezzus, and PCs can only glean the preceding information from him via a Sense Motive check (DC 20), by calming him with a Diplomacy check (DC 20), or with a great deal of gold (250 gp loosens his tongue). When PCs have Fra Lorenzo's damning evidence, they can confront Paramezzus as in **Event 17**.

increased prowess, however, and is concerned (Sense Motive, DC 20, to detect his anxiety in the battle). If the PCs gain the upper hand in the match or even just strike a telling blow, they might hear Niggles complain, "See? I told you we should have given some to Severus, too." (Listen, DC 10) This distracts Severus and he labors under a –1 penalty to attack rolls and skill checks for the remainder of the combat while he puzzles over his teammate's comments. If the PCs are about to win, Niggles pulls out his used bloodrush poultice and tries to slap it onto Severus's scaly neck. This causes Severus to attack his teammate. The match is signaled as over, Commissioner Flugg sputters into the ring, and Team Tongue is disqualified for fractiousness. Niggles fights to the death to retrieve the used poultice.

If the PCs recover the poultice, they have a clue to crack the case. If they show it to Paramezzus, he feigns indifference but acts quickly to remove the PCs as a threat (see **Event 12**). If the PCs take the used poultice to Fra Lorenzo, the neighborhood herbalist, he asks to see a fresh brewbag (see the "Gather Information—**Event Blocks B and C**" sidebar for details on Fra Lorenzo).

The PCs are likely to raid Paramezzus's office for a fresh cataplasm after meeting the herbalist. See **Event 13** and area **B1** for the circumstances and possible results of such a raid. Make sure to stage any remaining events you wish before the characters take an unused poultice to Fra Lorenzo, for once Paramezzus is linked to the the drug and the gladiator deaths, the alchemist looses anarchy on the arena and disrupts the normal flow of events.

In any case, after this battle, the PCs move to the **Block C** events. **Block C** wraps up the event-based portion of the adventure, and an excellent starting point, although not the only starting point, for **Block C** is "The Red and the Yellow, Part II" (**Event 11**).

11. THE RED AND THE YELLOW, PART II—THE BEAST PENS (AREA B2) (EL 5)

Whether Trixa is the PCs' manager or not, they almost literally run into her in the pens. This encounter works well if staged while the PCs are walking toward Paramezzus's office to confront him or to search for more bloodrush.

> A very human voice shrieks in pain among the growls, barks, and cries of the beasts. Trixa Hatchet comes running around the corner, a girallon in hot pursuit!

Trixa's father is upset because Trixa refuses to give him a percentage of her earnings in the arena. To teach her a lesson, he used his Handle Animal skill to lock the girallon onto Trixa's scent.

Alfonse comes around the corner 2 rounds after the girallon does. He planned on calling the beast off after scaring his daughter, but upon seeing the PCs, Alfonse lets the girallon have at them.

Creatures: See **Event 5** for Trixa and Alfonse's statistics.

Girallon: hp 52; *Monster Manual* 104.

Development: If the PCs kill the girallon, Alfonse runs. But now Trixa sees the depths of her father's evil, and she helps the PCs run him down. With his daughter threatening to bear witness against him in the King's courts, Alfonse offers to trade information for his freedom.

Alfonse can tell the PCs that there is a drug operation going on in the Veins. He knows that it involves a drug called bloodrush, that gladiators are using it, and that Niggles and Dunlop offered to help him found a bloodrush ring in Plenith and Port Rhemis. He doesn't know who supplied the drug; he only heard Niggles and Dunlop refer to their supplier as a "twisted kook."

Alfonse can also be persuaded to tell the PCs the above information via a successful Intimidate check (DC 15). Trixa wants to turn him over to the King and let him be sentenced to the copper mines no matter what information the PCs coax out of Alfonse; she has begun to feel very uncomfortable knowing he's around.

After dealing with Trixa's father, the PCs are free to try to raid Paramezzus's office (**Event 13** and area **B1**) or engage in more gladiatorial matches. They might also encounter Arxus Nod's proxy ooze (**Event 14**) or confront Paramezzus with the used bloodrush poultice obtained from the Team Tongue match (for the confrontation, see **Event 12**).

12. BAD MEDICINE—PARAMEZZUS'S OFFICE AND THE VEINS ARENA FLOOR (AREAS B1 AND V2) (EL 6)

If the PCs take the used poultice bag from Niggles and show it to Paramezzus, he pretends to know nothing about it. A successful Sense Motive check opposed by the alchemist's Bluff check reveals that Paramezzus is holding something back. In fact, as soon as he sees the poultice netting in the PCs' hands, he makes up his mind to bribe Commissioner Flugg into declaring the PCs' next match a Caltrop Match versus the Dreadwood Wyvern. As soon as the PCs leave, he does just that.

Creatures: The Dreadwood Wyvern once ate forty halflings in one night. Outraged, the Kingdom sent the Royal Halberdiers to hunt it down. Sand Net factors secured the beast's contract for the arena, but its time here has made it no less bloodthirsty.

Wyvern: hp 59; *Monster Manual* 186.

Tactics: The wyvern can fly to avoid the caltrops. This makes the match inherently unfair, which is exactly why Paramezzus picked it. See the "Spice on the Sand" sidebar for details on a Caltrop Match.

The wyvern attempts to fly up and down the length of the arena on its 100-foot chain and make Flyby Attacks with its claws. If it hits with a claw, it hangs on and stings with its tail. The wyvern's first targets are arcane spellcasters, because they are typically the most susceptible to its poison. They are also the ones most likely to be able to cast *fly* or deal significant damage from a distance, thus negating the wyvern's mobility advantage. If only one or two foes remain on the ground, the wyvern lands and attempts to use the full-attack option with its bite, stinger, and wings. In this case, it attacks the strongest fighter first and finishes off any lingering foes later.

Development: If the party survives the Caltrop Match, Paramezzus animates the Golden Shambler and sets it upon them at some time in the near future (see **Event 15**). If the PCs attempt to raid Paramezzus's office to obtain a fresh poultice rather than a used one, see **Event 13** and area **B1**. If they ask further questions of those in the arena, see the "Gather Information (**Event Blocks B and C**)" sidebar. They might also encounter Arxus's proxy ooze (see **Event 14**), or rescue Trixa from her father if they have not yet done so (see **Event 11**).

13. Digging Up the Dirt—Paramezzus's Office (Area B1)

Run this event when the PCs go to search Paramezzus's office.

See area **B1** for the details of Paramezzus's office. In addition to the information contained in the room's description, a few notes are in order.

First, keep in mind that Paramezzus is almost always in his office. He even sleeps there. The PCs most likely need to create a diversion to lure him away from his office if they want to ransack the room unmolested.

Second, realize that once the PCs acquire a fresh bloodrush poultice from this room, they are close to solving the mystery. If they take one of these herb nets to Fra Lorenzo, he identifies it as the cause of the gladiator deaths (see the "Gather Information—**Event Blocks B and C**" sidebar for details on Fra Lorenzo). All the PCs must do then is return with Fra Lorenzo or his signed statement; when Paramezzus is shown this evidence, he triggers his plan to destroy the Veins.

Take care to stage all the events you wish before the PCs confront Paramezzus with their final pieces of evidence. **Events 11**, **12**, **14**, and **15** have been designed so that they all could occur while the PCs travel between Paramezzus's office and Fra Lorenzo's booth in the bazaar.

14. Every Girl Loves a Romantic Ooze, Part II—The Beast Pens (Area B2) (EL 5)

Although listed as occurring in the Beast Pens, this event can transpire in almost any underground location at the Veins.

> The normal damp of the corridor gives way to a glistening jelly coating the walls. The jelly is throbbing with life and slithers off the wall toward your feet.

If the PCs refrain from assaulting it, the jelly shares its message.

The slime begins to form letters. Slimy pseudopods spell out, "Help Arxus." Rearranging themselves, the gelatinous tendrils form the message, "Loves Thel." Next is, "His touch deadly." Then the jelly rears up and splats down all at once, leaving blobs spelling, "She must be fungus too. Help Arxus!" Finally the jelly coalesces into a giant arrow pointing to a crack in the wall.

Creatures: The ochre jelly is a slave to Arxus and has been trained to form its body into words, begging the PCs' intercession with Thel on Arxus's behalf. If the PCs peremptorily attack the ochre jelly, it splits, and one part fights while the other spells out Arxus's message. PCs fighting the belligerent jelly can make a Spot check (DC 10) each round to see the message; those not fighting spot it easily.

In the crack in the wall is a recipe that Arxus believes will transform Thel into a pudding like he believes himself to be. In fact, these are the scribblings of a madman and merely make her hair fall out.

If the PCs take the paper and do not molest the ochre jelly, Arxus assumes they are his proxies and will woo Thel for him. If the PCs tear up the paper and laugh, continue to attack the jelly, or run away, the jelly fights until reduced to half its hit points. It seeps through cracks in the walls, and that night Arxus sends the ochre jelly to attack the PCs in their sleep.

Ochre Jelly: hp 60; *Monster Manual* 105.

Development: If the PCs inform Thel of Arxus's survival and his slimy intentions, her face goes ashen. Thel teeters between wanting to kill whatever vile creature Arxus has become and feeling guilty about slaying Arxus in the first place. In the end, she connects Arxus with the fungal assaults she has been suffering and instructs the PCs to add Arxus's extermination to their list of tasks in the service of the Achillia stable.

After encountering Arxus's ocher jelly, the PCs can encounter Trixa and her father if they have not yet done so (see **Event 11**). They can also ransack Paramezzus's office (see **Event 13**) or engage in questioning the locals or fighting independent gladiators (see the appropriate sidebars). It might also be time for Paramezzus to sic the re-animated Golden Shambler on the PCs (**Event 15**).

15. DON'T CALL IT A COMEBACK—THE TUNNEL ENTRANCE (AREA V1) (EL 3)

If possible, Paramezzus sends the Shambler zombie at the PCs right after a match before they have regained their strength. He decides upon this course of action only after the PCs have proven themselves a threat, probably by showing him a recovered bloodrush poultice (**Event 10**), and after they have defeated the Dreadwood Wyvern (see **Event 12**).

A boy yells excitedly up ahead in the tunnel. Soon, Short Fang comes running into view. He stops in front of you, heaving and catching his breath. Then he draws himself up, inhales deeply, and unleashes a torrent of questions. "Is it true? Did you see it? Where is it? Can you . . . Oh no!"

Following Short Fang's gaze, you see a rubbery mound of flesh, roots, and yellowing vegetation undulating toward you. Suddenly, it snaps two tendrils straight at your eyes!

Creature: These are the remains of the Golden Shambler, animated by Paramezzus's scroll of *animate dead* to kill the PCs. A bizarre golden shambling mound in life, the creature retains no memories of its former self. The Golden Shambler originally died of bloodrush use and was buried with great ceremony in a nearby graveyard. Paramezzus guided the zombie mound to the PCs and then stole back to his office to avoid suspicion as long as possible.

Rufillius came running because word spreads fast in the Veins, and he heard that his beloved mentor shambled the halls once more. The boy stands shocked, feet rooted to the ground, broken-hearted to see what has been done to his idol. He wails inconsolably throughout the ensuing fight.

BEASTS IN THE PENS

Any number of creatures can be found in the pens of the Veins at any given time. Currently, the owners keep the following creatures in the pens, all of which have had some level of training:

- One owlbear
- Two displacer beasts
- One wyvern (the Dreadwood Wyvern)
- Two girallons
- Four ankhegs
- Two carrion crawlers
- One basilisk

If you're looking for an easy way to add spice to a match, add one of these or another monster to the mix and see what happens. If the PCs are having an easy time of their trek through the burning Veins, an encounter with an enraged monster can shock them out of any complacency.

Animated Golden Shambler, Huge Zombie: hp 55; *Monster Manual* 192.

Tactics: The zombie executes a partial charge in the first round. It follows up with melee attacks on anything living and within reach.

Development: During the fight, sobbing in shock and despair, Short Fang drops the leather training belt the Golden Shambler bequeathed to him. The belt lands oddly, a secret pouch is jostled open, and a hidden net of bloodrush tumbles out.

This is another potential case-cracker. If the PCs haven't searched Paramezzus's office, this is a second place where they can find an unspoiled sample of bloodrush. If they take it to Fra Lorenzo, he can link it to the deaths and to Paramezzus.

If they go knocking on mausoleum doors at the nearest graveyard, the PCs eventually turn up the local undertaker, Rig Jambones (male Com1). Rig is a die-hard fan, and a Diplomacy check (DC 10) convinces Rig to tell the PCs, "Yeah, I did see that crazy crook-back poking around the Shambler's grave yesterday."

Ad-hoc Experience Award: Award 50% more experience (as a story award) for defeating the Golden Shambler zombie if any PC was thoughtful enough to either shield Rufillius from the violence or comfort the boy after the battle (requires a successful Diplomacy check, DC 10).

16. A CAGE WITH A VIEW—THE VEINS ARENA FLOOR (AREA V2)

This is the climactic battle of the gladiatorial season. Only the seven gladiators with the highest Fame point totals receive entry bids. For any PCs who do not qualify, Thel can find them jobs as honeyball concessionaires for the match (that job pays 2 gp per day).

The Fame or Infamy Point totals for the other gladiators are: Severus Tulero—23; Squirt Hurk—20; Mountain Morasso—15; Niggles—14; Jeb Hurk—12; and all the rest have less than 5.

The crowd is chanting with Diamond Dharina, "Lock them in! Lock them in!" Like the arena itself, the marble cage is white but shot through with red veins. The cage has no roof; once the portcullis falls, the only way out is up.

This event is deceptively simple: The first one out of the cage wins. However, the only way out is to climb up and over the walls; all transportation save climbing is forbidden (no flying, no *spider climbing*, and so on). The walls of the massive cage are 40 feet high and fairly easy to climb (DC 10). The cage itself covers a 40-foot square. While still in the locker room, the PCs must choose whether to wear armor or to leave it off and avoid the armor check penalty. Squirt Hurk is the only gladiator who doffs his armor for the match.

Tactics: Squirt doesn't wear armor because he plans on using his *sanctuary* spell to scramble up the walls untouched. Severus, the defending Marble Cage champion, uses *suggestion*, *polymorph other*, and *deeper darkness* to slow the ascent of any climber in the lead. The yuan-ti's overarching strategy is to destroy the competition and then enjoy the adulation of the crowd while leisurely climbing out, just like he did last year. Mountain Morasso assumes everyone will target him and uses the total defense action for the first 3 rounds. Niggles and Jeb Hurk seek to team up with any other gladiator only to betray their partner and make a climb to glory.

Granting quarter is still mandated in a marble cage match. Any NPC gladiator reduced to 15 hit points or fewer cries for quarter. A handler then lifts the portcullis halfway, and the shamed gladiator is forced to exit.

See the *Player's Handbook*, page 64, for rules on climbing and fighting while climbing.

Development: If the PCs have not fingered Paramezzus yet, he tips his hand during this event. This is the grandest event since last year's Thunder Throwdown, and the memories it stirs are too painful for Paramezzus to bear. After 10 rounds, he storms downstairs and attempts to burn down the Veins (see **Event 17**).

If the PCs have already defeated Paramezzus, feel free to run this event as a fun denouement to the adventure. The winner receives a gold and platinum Veins championship helm and earns 1 Fame point. The winner also receives a gate cut of 500 gp plus ten times his Fame score. Stable Achillia gladly picks up all clerical fees incurred.

17. HOLDING THE BAG (PLOT)—PARAMEZZUS'S OFFICE (AREA B1)

If the PCs confront Paramezzus with sufficient evidence (for example, a fresh poultice and Fra Lorenzo's testimony), he panics.

The twisted alchemist narrows his eyes. His breath comes rapidly, and his bent back rises and falls with the effort. He sneers, "Those scum deserved their poison. Gladiators? Ha! Murderers! Slaughter decent boys, will they? Kill my son in the arena? No! Where are you, Thel? I'm coming for you, girl, and you'll be cold in the Veins this night. Erythnul speed me!" There is a popping sound, the scent of burning leather, and a billowing cloud of gritty smoke. When it clears, Paramezzus is gone.

Paramezzus purchased a *contingency* spell from an archmage fan and had it keyed to trigger a *teleport* spell

on the phrase, "Erythnul speed me!" He *teleports* to the Beast Pens (area **B2**). Once there he flings open the cage doors. Then he dashes to area **B3** and douses the trap doors with alchemist's fire. The floor supporting the arena is wood, and the alchemist's fire is incendiary enough to burn it despite the sand massed on top. Lastly, Paramezzus hurries off to find and kill Thel.

This concludes the **Block C** events and the event-based portion of the adventure. Proceed to area **B1**, where the characters begin their fight through a stadium gone mad.

PANDEMONIUM IN THE VEINS

To reach Thel and rescue her, the PCs must run a gauntlet of burning rooms, wild beasts, and stampeding fans. If instead of confronting Paramezzus in his office, the PCs were fighting in the Marble Cage when the alchemist struck, then they are trapped inside the cage and hear Thel screaming for help from her Cloud Box when they reach the top of the cage.

B1. ALCHEMIST'S CHAMBER (EL VARIES)

This is Paramezzus's office. The door is open during the day and locked at night (Open Lock, DC 25). An odor of mint hangs in the room at all times. A masterwork alchemist's lab is set up against the far wall beside a bed that looks like a millipede breeding ground. Inside the physician's desk, he keeps records of the injured fighters he has treated at the Veins.

Trap (EL 3): In a trapped secret panel behind the main drawer (Search, DC 25), Paramezzus keeps an onyx and jade holy symbol of Erythnul, Master of Pandemonium (50 gp), several fresh bloodrush poultices, and his Autodemonia, a diary. The Autodemonia is filled with panegyrics to Erythnul and disgusting vituperations against Thel. Near the first of every year, the diary has a shank of fur, a feather, or a scale pinned to its page. Characters who make an Intelligence check (DC 15) realize that ever since Paramezzus first manifested sorcerous talents, he has been unable to resist the perverse self-destructive behavior of summoning a familiar and then torturing it to death.

Poison Needle Trap: CR 3; +8 ranged (1 plus giant wasp poison); Search (DC 22); Disable Device (DC 20). Note: See the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 80 for a description of giant wasp poison and its effects.

The room is normally occupied; by day, Paramezzus sees patients, by night, the alchemist sleeps while his son broods in a wall and curses his father for not accepting his new form. PCs who attempt to Search the room have to overcome, distract, or win the confidence of the room's occupants before they can ransack its contents.

If the PCs confront Paramezzus here, he disappears as in **Event 17**. After he vanishes, read the following:

> The door blew shut when Paramezzus vanished, but now a black ooze begins seeping under the cracks. The bottom of the wooden door sizzles and burns where it touches the dark mass, and an acrid smoke wafts up.

Creature (EL 7): This is Arxus Nod. By a freakish combination of unrequited love and long-suffering hatred, Arxus came back from death as a ghost. What's worse, his body was transformed by his father's horrid alchemy into a black pudding (the final stages of the transformation took place after the body was disposed of). Arxus's death drove him beyond sanity; when he first returned as a ghost over the remains of his body, he assumed that this the pudding was merely a new form. He possessed the creature and now thinks he actually is a black pudding. He can communicate with literate PCs by shaping letters with his pseudopods.

If the PCs played Cupid earlier for Arxus with Thel, or tried to help the pudding outside of acting as proxies, then the deranged fungal ooze might forget filial loyalty and step aside to let the characters rescue his beloved (Diplomacy, DC 10). If not, the PCs can attempt to Bluff their way past Arxus by pledging to deliver Thel to him.

If the confrontation with Paramezzus did not take place in his office, Arxus still appears and attempts to waylay or at least bargain with the PCs (he has little entertainment other than spying on his father through the cracks in the walls and keeping an "eye" out for his beloved Thel).

Regardless of the status of his relationship with the PCs, if he survives his encounter with them, Arxus tails the characters through the arena and is watching when they face his father in the Cloud Box above.

Arxus Nod, Male Human Ghost Ftr4: CR 6; Medium-size Undead (6 ft. 0 in. tall); HD 4d12; hp 24; Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 13, flat-footed 10; Atk +7 melee (1d4, incorporeal touch); SA horrific appearance, malevolence, manifestation; SQ undead, incorporeal, rejuvenation, turn resistance +4; AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +2; Str 16, Dex 14, Con —, Int 11, Wis 13, Cha 12.

Skills: Bluff +4, Climb +6, Diplomacy +4, Handle Animal +4, Hide +10, Listen +9, Ride +4, Search +8, Spot +9. *Feats:* Endurance, Improved Initiative, Lightning Reflexes, Run, Weapon Focus (longsword), Weapon Specialization (longsword).

Black Pudding (possessed): hp 115; *Monster Manual* 145.

Note: Arxus currently possesses the body of a black pudding. He believes, in fact, that he is the black pudding and he never voluntarily leaves the body of the black pudding or uses his undead powers in any way. While Arxus does not gain the improved grab, acid, constrict, and split extraordinary abilities of the black pudding, his caustic "friends" retain full command of their own powers.

Grey Ooze: hp 26; *Monster Manual* 145.

Ochre Jelly: hp 60; *Monster Manual* 146.

B2. BEAST PENS (EL VARIES)

In normal times, these cages are locked (Open Lock, DC 20), and two animal handlers constantly shovel food in and dung out of the cages. When the PCs arrive here after the fire has started, read or paraphrase the following.

> The corridors here are full of hooting, gibbering, screeching, and the general noise of panicked, trapped creatures. Feathers drift through sooty black smoke.

The smoke induces coughing and hacking but is not suffocating. It does obscure vision, giving everything one-half concealment and a 20% miss chance. The smoke extends to the red lines on the map.

Creatures (EL 6 or EL 8): If the PCs helped Trixa slay one girallon, only one remains; otherwise, two are loose here. The arena also keeps an owlbear that has been in the gladiator pits for thirty years and is screeching in delirium at its moment of freedom. Both monsters attack the PCs once the characters are spotted, avoiding each other with the mutual respect big predators often show one another.

Girallon: hp 52; *Monster Manual* 105.

Owlbear: hp 47; *Monster Manual* 148.

Tactics: The girallon fights until slain, but the owlbear, thrilled at its freedom, tries to flee in the direction of the trapdoors (the only exit it knows of) if reduced to half or fewer hit points.

B3. ELEVATORS AND TRAP DOORS

There are four platforms here, each connected to a complicated pulley system. A platform can elevate 1,000 pounds up through the trap door into the arena when cranked (Strength check DC 10).

> The ceiling is ablaze with a scarlet fire. Dirty smoke clogs the hall, and a syrupy, black liquid drips from the ceiling.

The syrupy, black liquid is alchemist's fire. Anyone moving under the trap doors has a chance to catch on fire (*Dungeon Master's Guide* page 86).

B4. BATHS

Gladiators relax here before and after matches. Short Fang can often be found in here listening to the older gladiators tell stories from the pit.

> The air is clear here, and you can see bathtubs and bathing pools lining the walls. A desk in the corner is charred but not on fire. Bone dice lie scattered on top in disarray.

The water here can be useful for a PC who catches on fire and needs to douse herself.

B5. LOCKER ROOMS (EL 5)

The locker rooms are a place where gladiators can store their stagewear. Most of the time, a sharp-eyed attendant monitors the entrance to chase away fans.

> Banging sounds betray the presence of two looters in the locker rooms. When one thief pulls his head out of Mountain Morasso's locker with an armload of valuable memorabilia, he shouts in surprise and recognition.

Creatures: Dunlop and Niggles have decided that now would be a great time to raid a more successful gladiator's locker. They only attack the PCs if the PCs look vulnerable. Otherwise, they attempt to Bluff ("Mountain asked us to bring this stuff to him, honest!"). An Intimidate check (DC 20) forces the truth out of them, and they replace Mountain's trophies and slink out of the burning arena.

Niggles and Dunlop: See **Event 10** for statistics.

B6. STORE ROOMS

These rooms contain boats for naval battles when the arena is flooded, extra chains for hauling reluctant beasts up into the arena, as yet unused wooden legs, and much more. Every weapon in the *Player's Handbook* can be found here, including the exotic weapons.

A Search check (DC 20) reveals a stash of over a hundred vellum sheets, all covered with love poems scratched out in a very large hand (it is difficult for Arxus to manipulate a quill with only pseudopods for hands). The works are unsigned, but most of them focus on Thel's penultimate beauty and long for the day when she will be positively effulgent with spores for hair and skin that crawls over a liquefied skeleton.

THE VEINS

Once they emerge into the smoke-dimmed daylight, the PCs glimpse Thel Achillia battling in a luxury Cloud Box suspended high above the arena floor.

All around the edge of the arena (just inside the first row of seating) rises a 40-foot-high *antimagic* moat. It protects fans from any magical or supernatural effects employed in the arena, and it also keeps PCs from launching spells into the skybox at Thel. To defeat Paramezzus, they probably need to make their way to the battle and engage him in melee.

Trap (EL 1 or EL 2): The skybox in which Thel is currently battling Paramezzus is directly across from the staircase the PCs use to ascend to the arena floor. The characters have two choices: They can either sprint across the burning floor of the arena before climbing into the stands, or they can climb into the stands right next to the stairs and clamber through the smoldering bleachers, fleeing spectators, and the remaining debris of the arena. The first option puts the PCs at more risk, since the floor of the arena is dancing with hotter flame, but it also takes less time since the route is more direct.

Characters moving either way must make a saving throw each round they spend in either area. See areas **V2** and **V3** for details on these hazards.

Development: Once the PCs reach the base of the skybox, it takes 1 more round to climb the narrow stairs and gain access to the chamber.

V1. TUNNEL TO BASEMENT (EL VARIES)

Thel and Commissioner Flugg engineered the tunnels to enhance the natural pressure differential between the underground complex and the arena. The resulting constant zephyr makes banners wave and manes of hair dance dramatically on the wind when gladiators and beasts enter the Veins. When fire consumes the stands, the pressure differential is dangerously amplified.

The tunnel disgorges into a scene from the lower planes. A wind blasts at your back, pushing you out of the tunnel into the conflagration that consumes the Veins. Fans, some with tunics and cheering signs ablaze, are stampeding toward the bazaar on the far side of the arena. Looking up to the Cloud Boxes, you briefly glimpse an arm in adamantine-laced leather and the flash of a scimitar through the sparkling window, but then the flames leap up and block your vision.

Creatures (EL 3): A panicked ankheg skitters about the tunnel entrance. Terrified by the wildfire in the Veins and stymied by the edifice's marble foundation,

it remains as trapped now as it was in the pens. Too frightened to be hungry, it ignores the PCs unless they assault it. Unfortunately, the backdraft rushing from the tunnel into the arena might blast the PCs into the beast. If a PC is blown into the ankheg, it interprets this as an aggressive charge and attacks.

Ankheg: hp 29; *Monster Manual* 18.

Trap: PCs can avoid the buffeting winds by detecting the peril and clinging to wall handholds as they enter the arena. They are safe unless they ascent the final 10 feet of the stairs leading up into the arena. A PC affected by the trap suffers contusion damage as noted, rolls to a stop 30 feet into the arena floor (area **V2**), and provokes the ankheg as he tumbles by unless he succeeds at a second Reflex save (DC 20).

Wind Trap: CR 2; no attack roll necessary (1d6); Reflex save (DC 20) avoids; Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 20). *Note:* A successful Disable Device check means the character has rigged a makeshift breakwall of spare weapon trunks and archery targets, deflecting the wind from most of the passage's entrance. Also, if a character is blown onto the arena floor, he risks taking damage from the flaming sands (see area **V2** for details).

V2. ARENA FLOOR (EL 2)

The fighting floor of the Veins has never been more deadly. The sand radiates waves of heat, and ash from the burning bleachers falls like snow. Animal and human screams mix with the thunder-cracks of timber beams snapping under the sand. Each time a beam cracks, the sand heaves and sinks a little more.

The wooden floor is reinforced by stone and does not collapse completely. A Profession (engineer) check (DC 10) reveals this, but otherwise the PCs should be worried about the floor collapsing at any moment.

Trap: The heat is abysmal, and the ash is hot enough to set characters' clothes, hair, and equipment on fire. See page 86 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for rules on abysmal heat and catching on fire. Moreover, a PC must make a Balance check (DC 10) for each round of movement in the sand; failure means that he is knocked from his feet as a support beam cracks and the sand slides.

End to end, the arena is 100 feet long, so most human characters should be able to make it the entire length with one run action, a single Reflex save, and a single Balance check.

Flaming Arena Floor: CR 2; flaming floor (2d6) and risk catching on fire; Reflex save (DC 13) avoids; Search N/A; Disable Device N/A.

V3. BLEACHERS (EL 1)

Hysterical spectators rush through the inferno in the stands. Next to you, a half-orc grunts as he is knocked against a balustrade by three dwarves barreling past.

Exits at the back of each aisle allow relatively quick evacuation, but fans at the end of every line are mad with fear and run haphazardly searching for alternate egress.

Trap: PCs have a chance to catch on fire as they hurdle through the burning bleachers (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide* page 86). Moving through the stands at full speed requires a character to make a Balance check (DC 8) or fall prone. The total distance through the stands from the stairs to the base of the skybox is 150 feet.

Flaming Arena Gallery: CR 1; flaming bleachers (1d6); Reflex save (DC 13) avoids; Search N/A; Disable Device N/A. *Note:* Moving through the bleachers requires a character to make a Balance check (DC 8) each round or fall prone.

V4. TRAP DOORS (EL 1)

Trap: The trap doors here have been weakened by the heat and will collapse under a character's weight.

Pit Trap (20 ft. Deep): CR 1; no attack roll necessary (2d6); Reflex save (DC 20) avoids; Search (DC 20); Disable Device (DC 20).

V5. STAIRS

The hanging Cloud Boxes sway in the breeze 60 feet up. Windows line the four walls of each box. The undersides bear frescoes of gladiator matches, chariot races, and flooded arena naval battles, all famously painted by the Aerdi, who hung beneath the boxes for two years to complete his masterpiece.

V6. BAZAAR

The bazaar is normally crowded with bargain hunters, but after Paramezzus fills the Veins with pandemonium, it is flooded with escapees and burn victims. When operating under usual conditions, the bazaar offers any item in the *Player's Handbook* for sale at standard prices.

Burn victims moan in triage while waiting for the arena clerics. A father calls out for a missing son. A stranger leads a boy out of the crowd, and the reunited father and son hug and clap each other on the back, sending puffs of sand ash skyward.

V7. BAZAAR TUNNEL

The portcullis bisecting the tunnel that runs from the arena floor to the bazaar fell and stopped about 4 feet above the floor. An escaped carrion crawler lies impaled under the portcullis, its dead body propping the gate up and allowing spectators to run through to safety outside.

V8. CLOUD BOX FIVE

Iron chains suspend the Veins' luxury suites 40 feet over the searing sands. This is high enough to be out of the ash storm falling below.

Suspension Chains: 4 inches thick; hardness 10; hp 120; Break DC 30.

Cloud Box Floors and Ceilings: 6 in. thick; hardness 5; hp 60; Climb DC 20.

Cloud Box Exterior Walls: 1 in. thick window glass; hardness 1; hp 1; Climb DC 25.

Wind sweeps the catwalks high above the arena floor. Thuds and the angry ring of steel on steel resound from Cloud Box five. With a spray of glass, a rogue in Sand Net leather crashes out the window and plummets, arms flailing, to the hot sand below. From inside the box, a voice growls, "Wench, that man had a wife and child. Sell me your shares, or they'll be in the front row when you're chained at the stake on Hydra Day." The answering cry rings out over the cacophony in the arena: "Never!"

Thel has just eliminated one Sand Net thug, but Volpone Venazzi and another thug remain. Compounding the difficulty is Paramezzus, who has just arrived.

Fighting on the catwalk requires a Balance check (DC 10) each round. Failure means the character falls to the ground.

Creatures: Paramezzus arrived just ahead of the characters. Volpone and his guild crony gained the box immediately before that, surprising Thel while she was shouting evacuation instructions to the crowd below.

Paramezzus Nod, Male Human Sor4/Clr3: CR 7; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft. 1 in. tall); HD 4d4 plus 3d8; hp 27; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10; Atk + 3 melee (1d4–1/crit 19–20, dagger); SA spells, rebuke undead 5/day; AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +9; Str 8, Dex 10, Con 11, Int 12, Wis 15, Cha 15.

Skills: Alchemy + 10, Concentration +6, Diplomacy +6, Heal +5, Knowledge (religion) +4, Scry +4, Spellcraft +6. *Feats:* Brew Potion, Skill Focus (Alchemy), Spell Focus (Conjuration), Spell Focus (Enchantment).

Sorcerer Spells (6/7/4; base save DC = 13 + spell level): 0—*daze*, mage hand, mending, prestidigitation, read magic, ray of frost*; 1st—*charm person*, grease*, mage armor*; 2nd—*web**.

*Conjuration or Enchantment spells. The base save DC for these spells is 15 + spell level.

Cleric Spells Prepared (4/4/3; base save DC = 12 + spell level): 0—*detect magic* ×2, *read magic, resistance*; 1st—*command*†, *protection from good**, *random action*†, *sanctuary*; 2nd—*hold person*†, *invisibility**, *spiritual weapon*.

*Domain spell. *Domains:* Evil (evil spells cast at +1 caster level); Trickery (Bluff, Disguise, and Hide are class skills).

†Conjuration or Enchantment spells. The base save DC for these spells is 15 + spell level.

Possessions: wand of Melf's acid arrow, brooch of shielding (57 hp remaining), *Quaal's feather token* (*whip*), scroll of *mirror image* (already read), scroll of *animate dead* (already cast if the Golden Shambler was reanimated), *potion of invisibility* ×2, *potion of cure moderate wounds*, onyx and jade holy symbol of Erythnul (50 gp), monocle on platinum chain (350 gp), hide scraps of former familiars, pendant coin purse with 15 pp.

Volpone Venazzi: See **Event 2** for statistics.

Thel Achillia: See **Event 2** for statistics.

Tactics: Paramezzus has one goal: Thel's death. He is willing to die himself if his death assures Thel an identical fate. He has already read his *mirror image* scroll, and he launches a *web* at Thel and her other assailants in the first round, hoping to immobilize everyone and have Thel at his mercy. If the Achillia stable boss ever moves near a broken window or onto the catwalk, Paramezzus casts *grease*, hoping she will slip and fall to her doom. Paramezzus casts *spiritual weapon* and uses his *Quaal's feather token* to occupy opponents while he concentrates on the head of the Achillia stable. If all else fails and Arxus survived, Paramezzus calls to his lurking son to eat the chains that support the Cloud Box. Arxus cannot do this himself, but his gray ooze cohort can do it in 3 rounds. At the end of the third round, the box free-falls into the melting sand. If Arxus is allied with the PCs, Paramezzus and the PCs can roll dueling Diplomacy checks to see to whom the pudding is more devoted. The DM should apply modifiers to the roll according to how well the PCs have treated Arxus.

Volpone Venazzi is afflicted by nothing resembling Paramezzus's monomania. In fact, Volpone and his bodyguard flee if the PCs reduce him to half his hit points. Until then, Volpone attacks Thel or any PC he thinks he can quickly finish off. He like to use his Improved Bull Rush feat to send PCs crashing out windows.

As long as she has 10 or more hit points, Thel fights alongside the PCs. She is almost glad that Volpone has finally faced her over swords; she is more comfortable with blades than business contracts. Thel is surprised by Paramezzus's capacity for murder, and she can't quite believe how evil the man truly is. She attacks Volpone rather than Paramezzus, seeing him as more of a threat, unless Paramezzus catastrophically wounds her.

CONCLUSION

If Thel survives, she rebuilds the Veins with the PCs—if they're willing—headlining the fundraising event, Clash in the Clouds. This is a gladiator match staged to recreate the PCs final battle with Paramezzus and Volpone. A special glass-walled Cloud Box is suspended 20 feet over the sands, this time with a net, and the last fighter inside the box wins. Thel adopts Short Fang as her personal apprentice, and the Clash in the Clouds is his first match.

Thel also wants the PCs to finish off Sand Net. Volpone could be convinced to face a PC champion one-on-one with his interests in the arena at stake.

If Thel perishes and Volpone survives, Sand Net takes over the Veins. Fair competition is a thing of the past, and unless the PCs intervene, Short Fang endures a brief but harsh apprenticeship culminating in death at the claws of a harpy in a fixed match.

In any case, the PCs can capitalize on their fame. The new boss of the arena declares Savior Day, and the PCs can earn ten times their Fame points in gold by standing in the bazaar, greeting fans, and signing vellum sheets. Any PC who has accumulated more than 15 Fame points is asked to sit for the Aerdi as he is brought back in to re-paint the bottoms of Cloud Boxes damaged by smoke.

Frank writes, "This adventure is dedicated to my lovely fiance. Without a doubt, I rolled a natural 20 when I met her."

APPENDIX I: ARENA RULES

The basic arena match pits gladiators versus gladiators with no weapons barred, mundane or magical. It is "bring your own sword"; magical weapons are not supplied but are permitted. To protect spectators, a permanent *antimagic* moat has been raised in front of the first row of bleachers. The moat rises 40 feet to the top of the arena.

Any match's rules can be altered by the commissioner or by the agreement of both gladiators or teams of gladiators. The locals call this "putting spice on the sand." Common Spices are listed in a sidebar.

Preparation: In the locker rooms before a match, the gladiators are checked by the commissioner's referees armed with *wands of detect magic* (male human Wiz1; Sense Motive +2). Spellcasting is permitted during a match, but no gladiator is allowed to start a fight with spells already in place. This "no pre-casting" rule is what Paramezzus's non-magical bloodrush drug cleverly circumvents. Many gladiators go through personal rituals before a match, but these serve only to pump the warriors up. Some gladiators lift weights to appear larger before the crowd, others meditate, still others attempt to stare down their opponents from across the room. But no one is allowed to magically enhance him or herself until the fight has started.

Grudge Building: Playing to the fans is essential in the Veins. Bizarre creatures of myth, mighty magic, and incredible feats of strength and endurance are commonplace in a D&D gladiatorial arena, so the combatants must go to great lengths in other ways to gain the attention of the arena-goers. Much of this is accomplished through Grudge Building. Before each match, the opposing gladiators attempt to enter the ring dramatically and then perform for the crowd. Common actions in pre-match Grudge Building include casting figments and glamers to amaze the crowd and intimidate one's opponent, posing and flexing in the center of the ring, and of course shouting at one's opponent and detailing exactly how he will be dismembered.

Grudge Building can also be done during specific hosted shows between gladiator matches (see **Event 8** for an example). A character can choose another gladiator to build a grudge against on these shows, or he can ask the commissioner to assign him one. Grudge Building on such shows can be very lucrative (again, see **Event 8** for an example).

A Grudge Building check is a Perform (drama), Intimidate, Diplomacy, or Bluff check. Another type of Perform check can be substituted at your option. If the subject of the attempted grudge is present at the time of the check, this is an opposed check (failure on the part of the character attempting to build the grudge indicates the audience doesn't buy the performance). If the subject isn't present, the DC of the check is 10 + the subject's level + 1 for every 5 Fame points the subject possesses. The character can choose what skill to use. Players who roleplay Grudge Building especially well can be awarded a bonus to their Grudge Building check of up to one-half their character level. If a character defeats any opponent against whom he has made a successful Grudge Building check, he gains a bonus Fame point.

Fame Points: Every character has a certain

Nodwick
by Aaron Williams
www.nodwick.com
THERE'S THE OPENING MUSIC, NODWICK! LET'S GO!
THEY'RE STARTING THE FIGHT ALREADY?
NOT QUITE. THEY'VE GOT SOME POSING TO DO FIRST.
POSING? WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
THE FANS NEED TO BE FIRED UP OVER THE MATCH. JUST WATCHING SOME THUGS POUND ON EACH OTHER ISN'T AS EXCITING UNLESS THE COMBATANTS HAVE GIVEN THOSE IN THE STANDS A REASON TO CARE ABOUT THEM VIA VISUAL AIDS, DISPLAYS OF BRAVADO, AND VERBAL POSTURING.
I'LL RIP OUT YOUR *$€?!-IM *£@, AND SHOVE IT %,$* IN THE $*#@!!! AND %$*! SO YOU $*#@* %£@!!!
SO, WHY DID HE NEED NODWICK'S HELP TO DO THAT?
ER, SOMETIMES IT'S JUST NOT ENOUGH TO ONLY TELL SOMEONE WHAT YOU'RE GOING TO DO TO THEM...

number of Fame or Infamy points. Infamy points and Fame points are identical and instantly interchangeable. For example, if Squirt Hurk has 13 Infamy points and suddenly turns good by traitorously Squirt Bombing one of his brothers, he now has 14 Fame points (13 originally, plus 1 for a successful finishing move).

A character can gain 1 Fame point by:

• Using his named finishing move to finish an opponent. The finishing move gets no bonus outside the normal D&D rules, but the player must describe and name it. A finishing move can be attempted once per match.

• Winning a match.

• Winning a match versus an opponent against whom the PC has successfully built up a Grudge.

• Winning a match in 2 rounds or less.

• Winning a match without taking damage.

• Appearing in a match with Spice.

• Entering the arena dramatically before a match. A character can make a successful Perform (drama), Intimidate, Diplomacy, or Bluff check (DC 15 + his current Fame point total) to accomplish this. Another type of Perform check can be substituted at your option. If a player describes how his character uses a class skill or ability to enhance his entrance, he earns a bonus on his check equal to half his character level.

• Using his catch phrase in any combination of three separate and successful Grudge Building attempts or victorious matches. A player must devise his own catch phrase (famous examples include, "How about a ride on the Fireball Express?" or "It's time to play kobolds and dragons. Guess which one you are!").

• Doing massive amounts of damage with a single blow or spell to an opponent who still threatens you or your companions. In game terms, someone who successfully confirms a critical hit that deals more than 30 points of damage gets a fame point. A character or monster who deals more than 30 points of damage without a critical hit doesn't get the fame point, since the style and flash of a regular blow doesn't wow the fans as much, even if the damage dealt is incredibly high.

• Taking out (knocking unconscious or otherwise incapacitating) more than two uninjured foes in a single round.

• Any action that makes the fans cheer and jump and hug their friends in ecstasy or throw ale steins in derision (your judgment). An example of this might be using *telekinesis* to hoist one enemy into the air and then dropping him onto his companion to deal falling damage to both. Another example might be a villainous PC pouring acid down the back of a gladiator while that gladiator is distracted by Trixa or another manager.

Fame point gain is cumulative, but a PC can gain a maximum of 2 Fame points per match, so if a PC wins a Spiced grudge match against an opponent in 2 rounds or less, he gains a total of 2 Fame points (he would have gained 4).

Arena crowds are fickle. Characters can lose Fame points more easily than they can gain them. Loss of Fame points can happen in many ways, such as by:

• Missing a match (the fans consider this cowardly). Lose 1d4 Fame points.

• Missing a match versus an opponent against whom the character has built up a Grudge. Lose 2d4 Fame points.

• Missing a match with Spice. Lose 2 extra Fame points (in addition to those for missing a match).

• Losing a match in 2 rounds or less. Lose 1d3 Fame points.

• Losing a match without harming the opposing gladiator. Lose 1d2 Fame points.

• Losing to a gladiator who has never won a match. Lose 1d2 Fame points.

• Asking for quarter if the PC still has more than 10 hp remaining. Lose 1d3 Fame points.

• Employing any sort of delaying tactic (hiding in a *rope trick*, running around invisible while waiting for barbarian's rage to run out, and so on). Lose 1d3 Fame points.

Again, Fame point loss is cumulative, so if a PC loses a Spiced Grudge match against an opponent in 2 rounds or less, he loses 4 Fame points (note that there is no limit to the number of Fame points a character can lose in a single match). Characters who drop to –10 Fame points or less are usually released by their stable, as they've become more a liability than a draw to the arena.

In general, add half a character's Fame points to any Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information, or Intimidate check in the Veins (but do not add this bonus to any checks that could result in more Fame points). Add the full score if the character is talking to a fan rather than an employee.

Also add double a character's (new) Fame score in gold pieces to the character's cut from the gate after every match.

Note that Fame and Infamy scores can be negative; in such a case, apply the score as a penalty to all appropriate rolls and gate cuts.

Finally, note that only characters with Fame scores of 10 or higher can speak with Commissioner Flugg or Volpone Venazzi directly, and only the seven gladiators with the highest Fame scores are invited to the Marble Cage event at the end of the season.

Combat: As long as the players stay within the moat surrounding the arena floor (and extending 40 feet upward), no rules infringe upon the combat itself. All weapons, magical or mundane, are allowed, and no spell is forbidden. In the unlikely event that they damage something outside the moat, characters are liable for reparation costs.

A match ends when any gladiator cries "Quarter!" of his own free will. An entire team loses if just one of their member asks quarter. A match also ends when all of one side is unconscious or dead. Attacking a gladiator who has cried for quarter results in instant expulsion from either stable, as well as possible prosecution from local law enforcement. Other gladiators shun such killers, and might even go out of their way to take the law into their own hands against someone who commits this most heinous of arena crimes.

Clerics: Arena clerics cast *raise dead* on any gladiators who perish in a match. The clerics charge standard fees (950 gp) and take the fighter's gate cut in his future matches if the raised gladiator is unable to afford the miracle. The clerics also cast *cure moderate wounds* or other healing spells after fights for sums as listed in the *Player's Handbook*, page 114. Stable Achillia pays half of any cleric fees for its gladiators.

Arena Cleric, Male and Female Human Clr10 (2): CR 10; Medium-size Humanoid; HD 10d8+10; hp 68; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 17; Atk +9/+4 melee (1d8+2, *+1 heavy mace*); SA spells, turn dead 4/day; AL NG; SV Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +11; Str 13, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 18, Cha 12.

Skills: Concentration +14, Diplomacy +5, Heal +17, Knowledge (religion) +5, Spellcraft +4. *Feats:* Brew Potion, Combat Casting, Lightning Reflexes, Scribe Scroll, Run.

Spells Prepared (6/6/6/5/5/3; base save DC = 14 + spell level): 0—*detect magic* ×2, *guidance, light, resistance* ×2; 1st—*bless* ×2, *deathwatch, entropic shield, obscuring mist, sanctuary**; 2nd—*aid*, calm emotions, hold person* ×2, *lesser restoration, remove paralysis*; 3rd—*deeper darkness, dispel magic, protection from elements*, remove blindness/deafness, remove disease*; 4th—*dismissal, freedom of movement, holy smite*, neutralize poison, restoration*; 5th—*break enchantment, raise dead, spell resistance**.

*Domain spell. *Domains:* Good (good spells cast at +1 caster level); Protection (generate protective ward 1/day).

Possessions: +1 breastplate, +1 heavy mace, cloak of resistance +1, masterwork large steel shield.

General Arena Operations: The Veins is open 24 hours per day. Depending on the Commissioner's whims and the availability of gladiators, an event may range from 3–4 one-on-one matches to a grand, four-team blood bath. Special events are held seasonally. They include Hydra Days (summer), the Marble Cage (fall), the Thunder Throwdown (winter), and the Veins Immortals (spring).

Characters might wish to skulk through the Veins without thousands of spectators and dozens of employees watching them. The chart below details which areas are occupied during which hours on typical days in the Veins.

Gladiators frequent area **B1** by day, Arxus lurks there at night, and Paramezzus is always stationed there unless the PCs deliberately draw him away. Other areas, when occupied, contain 1d4 random gladiators (see "Appendix II: Independent Gladiators" and the named NPCs from the adventure), 1d4 arena employees (male human Exp1; Handle Animal +4, Profession (teamster) +3, Use Rope +2), or any number of fans (male and female human Com1), as appropriate to the venue.

Time of Day	Area Occupied (Match Day)	Area Occupied (Regular Day)
12–6 A.M.		V3
	B1	V3
	B1	
6–9 A.M.		V1, V2, V6
	B1, B2	V6
	B1	
9 A.M.–12 P.M.		V1, V2, V3, V6
	B1, B2, B4, B5	V1, V2, V6
	B1, B2	
12–9 P.M.		V1–8
	B1, B2, B4, B5	V1, V2, V6
	B1, B2, B4, B5	
9 P.M.–12 A.M.		V1, V2, V6
	B1, B4, B5	V6
	B1	

APPENDIX II: INDEPENDENT GLADIATORS

For those times when you or a player want a quick and dirty one-on-one, or when you just need extra muscle on the arena floor, here are the names and characteristics of some of the independent stable gladiators in the Veins. If you want to add a sense of urgency to the adventure, feel free to stage the dramatic death of one of the bloodrush users among this number.

Hamidou Mombasa, Male Dwarf Bbn3: CR 3; Medium-size Humanoid (4 ft., 5 in. tall); HD 3d12+9 (currently 3d12+6); hp 36 (currently maximum 33); Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 13, flat-footed 14; Atk +7 melee (1d8+3/crit ×3, *+1 battleaxe*); SQ dwarf traits, rage 1/day, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC); AL CG; SV Fort +6 (currently +5), Ref +6, Will +2; Str 15, Dex 16, Con 16 (currently 15), Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills: Handle Animal +5, Intimidate +4, Jump +8; Listen +4, Spot +4, Wilderness Lore +5. *Feats:* Dodge, Lightning reflexes, Weapon focus (battleaxe).

Possessions: +1 battleaxe, hide armor, buckler.

Hamidou learned to fight by watching the hyenas and jackals scavenge on the veldt. He crouches when fighting (Dodge feat), howls and springs from all fours when attacking. Hamidou has just started using bloodrush before every match.

Catch Phrase: Hamidou's catch phrase is a high-pitched howl, which the crowd loves to harmonize with.

Finishing Move: The Scavenger. When Hamidou attempts his finishing move, he crouches on all fours with his buckler over his head, slinks forward, and then lunges at his opponent's mid-section (or head, if the opponent is on the ground).

Kang Manjing, Male Elf Sor6: CR 6; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft., 4 in. tall); HD 6d4+18; hp 35; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10, touch 10, flat-footed 10; Atk +3 melee (1d6, quarterstaff) or +4 ranged (ranged touch); SA spells; SQ elf traits; AL CE; SV Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +6; Str 11, Dex 13, Con 16, Int 17, Wis 9, Cha 17.

Skills: Appraise +6, Concentration +11, Craft (calligraphy) +6, Intimidate +7, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Knowledge (history) +12, Profession (antique dealer) +7, Spellcraft +9. *Feats:* Craft Wondrous Item, Iron Will, Scribe Scroll.

Spells (6/7/6/4; base save = DC 13 + spell level): 0—*arcane mark, daze, detect magic, disrupt undead, ghost sound, read magic, resistance*; 1st—*charm person, hypnotism, shield, ventriloquism*; 2nd—*levitate, Melf's acid arrow*; 3rd—*suggestion.*

Possessions: scroll of *lightning bolt,* scroll of *grease,* scroll of *magic missile* (5th level), scroll of *shield* ×3, scroll of Melf's acid arrow (3rd level) ×3, dagger, Lotus Tiger mustachio wax.

Kang is a mystic with the ability to bend men's minds. He covets Trixa. He might challenge any PC spellcaster associated with the manager to a spell duel. In normal fights, Kang *levitates* up and out of the reach of melee fighters.

Catch Phrase: "Mind over sword."

Finishing Move: Conqueror's Pose. Opponents who succumb to Kang's *suggestion* that they lie down and surrender are then subject

to the humiliating experience of Kang placing one foot in triumph on their chests while raising his arms in victory.

Oakarms, Male Human Drd5: CR 5; Medium-size Humanoid (6 ft., 1 in. tall); HD 5d8; hp 30; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15; Atk +4 melee (1d6, sickle); SA animal companion, spells, wildshape 1/day; SQ nature sense, woodland stride, trackless step, resist nature's lure; AL NG; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +7; Str 11, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 11, Wis 17, Cha 15.

Skills: Animal Empathy +8, Diplomacy +10, Handle Animal +8, Intuit Direction +10, Knowledge (nature) +8, Wilderness Lore +9. *Feats:* Brew Potion, Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Track.

Spells (5/4/3/2; base save DC = 13 + spell level): 0—*create water, detect magic, flare, guidance, light*; 1st—*calm animals, cure light wounds* ×2, *faerie fire*; 2nd—*barkskin, charm person or animal, heat metal*; 3rd—*cure moderate wounds, poison*.

Possessions: *+1 hide, potion of cure moderate wounds* ×2, *potion of lesser restoration, potion of protection from elements* (*fire*), scroll of *heat metal*, wooden shield, masterwork sickle with mistletoe-wrapped hilt.

Oakarms loves to cast *barkskin* and *faerie fire* on young fans, much to the youngsters' delight. Oakarms fights with his black bear companion, Bharis.

Bharis, Black Bear: hp 19; *Monster Manual* 193.

Catch Phrase: "It's like Bharis always says, 'Don't smack the hive if you aren't ready for the bees.'"

Finishing Move: Harvester. Oakarms swings his sickle underhanded as if harvesting, and Bharis stands up and attacks from his hind legs.

Orange Enlightenment, Female Half-orc Mnk5: CR 5; Medium-size Humanoid (6 ft., 4 in. tall); HD 5d8+5; hp 35; Init +7; Spd 40 ft.; AC 18, touch 18, flat-footed 18; Atk +6 melee (1d8+3, unarmed strike) or +4/+4 melee (1d8+3, flurry of blows); SA stunning attack, unarmed strike, SQ evasion, immune to natural diseases, still mind, slow fall (20 ft.); AL LG; SV Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +8; Str 16, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 13, Wis 18, Cha 9.

Skills: Balance +11, Diplomacy +7, Hide +11, Innuendo +8, Listen +8, Move Silently +8, Spot +6, Swim +3, Tumble +6. *Feats:* Deflect Arrows, Dodge, Improved Initiative.

Possessions: Orange sari, meditative devotional journal. She has forsaken all other worldly goods.

This mysterious woman has taken a vow of silence. In a fight, she leads with her feet. If she participates in a match that requires the use of a weapon, she borrows equipment from the arena. Because of her high Balance skill modifier, she enjoys Tilting Floor matches.

Catch Phrase: In lieu of a spoken catch phrase, Orange Enlightenment simply poses in one of her martial arts forms.

Finishing Move: The Awakener. Orange Enlightenment tumbles into a handspring (Tumble check) and launches a flurry of blows at her foe with both feet.

Pop Gut, Male Human Ftr4: CR 4; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft., 4 in. tall); HD 4d10+4 (currently 4d10–4); hp 35 (currently maximum 27); Init +4; Spd 15 ft.; AC 16, touch 10, flat-footed 16; Atk +9 melee (1d12+7/crit ×3, greataxe); SV Fort +5 (currently +3), Ref +1, Will +1; AL CN; Str 17, Dex 10, Con 13 (currently 8), Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 11.

Skills: Climb +7, Craft (armorsmithing) +6, Craft (weaponsmithing) + 6, Intimidate +2, Jump + 7. *Feats:* Cleave, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (greataxe), Weapon Specialization (greataxe).

Possessions: +1 greataxe, splint mail, five beard barrettes in the shape of axes.

Many younger fighters in the arena affectionately revere Pop Gut as a father figure. They emulate his extreme use of Power Attack; he almost always employs it to its maximum each round. Pop Gut uses bloodrush.

Catch Phrase: "You only need to hit them once if you make their gut pop!"

Finishing Move: Popping the Gut. Pop Gut uses a maximum Power Attack and swings for the belly.

Kitrina Bolt, Female Human Evo5: CR 5; Size Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft., 10 in. tall); HD 5d4+5; hp 19; Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 10; Attack +2 melee (1d4/crit 19–20, dagger) or +4 ranged (ranged touch); SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +5; AL CN; Str 10, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 18, Wis 13, Cha 7.

Skills: Concentration +9, Craft (seamstress) +8, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Knowledge (the planes) +12, Perform (drama, epic) +2, Scry +10, Spellcraft +12. *Feats:* Brew Potion, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Spell Focus (Evocation).

Spells (4/4/3/2; base save DC = 14 + spell level): 0—*daze, detect magic, flare**†, *light, resistance*; 1st—*magic missile* ×2*, *shield, sleep*; 2nd—*blur, flaming sphere**† ×2; 3rd—*lightning bolt**†, *haste*.

Spellbook: 0—*arcane mark, dancing lights, daze, detect magic, detect poison, disrupt undead, flare**, *ghost sound, light**, *mage hand, mending, open/close, prestidigitation, read magic, resistance*; 1st—*burning hands, chill touch, expeditious retreat, feather fall, identify, magic missile**, *shield, sleep*; 2nd—*blindness/deafness, blur, flaming*

sphere, knock, rope trick, scare*; 3rd—*dispel magic, haste, lightning bolt*, wind wall**.

*These spells belong to the school of Evocation, which is Kitrina's speciality. Prohibited school: Conjuration.

†Because of Spell Focus (Evocation), the base save DC for these spells is 16 + spell level.

Possessions: wand of summon monster II, scroll of *lightning bolt* ×2, scroll of *wind wall* ×2, *potion of haste*, dagger, sewing kit, scarlet gladiator catsuit, unicorn-embossed spellbook.

Kitrina took her stage name from her favorite spell: lightning bolt. She likes Flying Matches, since they allow here to capitalize on the long ranges of her powerful Evocation magic. Kitrina is quite vain, and this has made her unpopular in the arena.

Catch Phrase: "Don't I look great?"

Finishing Move: Sandstorm. Kitrina uses a *wind wall* to kick up sand and then launches a *lightning bolt* through the disturbance at her opponent.

Amaranth, Female Half-elf Ftr5: CR 5; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft., 1 in. tall); HD 5d10+10 (currently 5d10); hp 45 (currently maximum 35); Init +2; Spd 20 ft.; AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15; Atk +7 melee (1d8+4, dire flail) and +7 melee (1d8+3, dire flail); SV Fort +6 (currently +4), Ref +3, Will +2; AL CG; Str 15, Dex 15, Con 14 (currently 10), Int 10, Wis 13, Cha 11.

Skills: Climb +8, Intimidate +3, Jump +8. *Feats:* Ambidexterity, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (dire flail), Two-weapon Fighting, Weapon focus (dire flail), Weapon Specialization (dire flail).

Possessions: +1 chainmail, masterwork dire flail, bandolier of 10 darts, 36 gp.

Amaranth never fit in when the other children who played Oak Oak Dryad, but she fits in just fine when the gladiators play their bloodier games at the Veins. Amaranth calls the two heads of her dire flail Tulip and Black Dahlia, and each is painted with an appropriate flower blossom. Amaranth uses bloodrush before her matches.

Catch Phrase: "If one is good, two are better."

Finishing Move: Deadly Bloom. Amaranth whirls both heads of her dire flail in circles while she spins in place, quickly striking out at opponents who attempt to close on her.

Vejes, Male Minotaur Ftr2: CR 6; Large Monstrous Humanoid (8 ft. tall); HD 6d8+24 plus 2d10+8 (currently 6d8+12 plus 2d10+4); hp 70 (currently 54); Init +0; Spd 20 ft.; AC 24, touch 9, flat-footed 24; Atk +14/+9 melee (1d10+6, *+1 Large trident*), +7 melee (1d8+2, gore); Reach 10 ft.; SA charge 4d6+7; SQ scent, natural cunning; AL CE; SV Fort +11 (currently +9), Ref +5, Will +6; Str 20, Dex 10, Con 18 (currently 15), Int 7, Wis 12, Cha 9.

Skills: Intimidate +6, Jump +3*, Listen +9, Search +6, Spot +9. *Feats:* Cleave, Great Fortitude, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (trident).

*Includes –6 armor check penalty.

Possessions: +1 Large trident, full plate, masterwork large steel shield, 55 gp.

See the *Monster Manual*, page 137, for minotaur special attacks and qualities.

Vejes doesn't play well with the other gladiators. Although a stronger fighter than most of his fellows, Vejes avoids most contact with them due to his savage nature. He never attends orientation meetings, preferring to show up for his battles, win (nearly always), and leave. Commissioner Flugg usually pits Vejes against monsters in matches with Spice, since a battle against most of the other gladiators wouldn't be fair. Vejes's last battle against another gladiator, in fact, was a loss to Volpone Venazzi for the Veins championship helm. Vejes uses bloodrush. See the cover of DRAGON #303 for an illustration of the savage Vejes.

Catch Phrase: "More gore!"

Finishing Move: Five-tine Toss. Vejes holds his trident in front of his face as he charges his foe (using the charge special attack), attempting to catch the opponent on all three tines of his weapon and his horns (this deals no extra damage). He then tosses his head and howls as the blood on his horns streams down onto his face.

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BEYOND THE LIGHT OF REASON

BY CAINE CHANDLER

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Magic Items Monsters NPCs Objects Settlements Traps

"Beyond the Light of Reason" is a D&D adventure designed for four 13th-level characters. Although designed to challenge an evenly balanced group of this level, this module can be played with 9th- to 15th-level PCs by increasing or decreasing the power levels of the villains accordingly. A cleric would be a good addition to a group playing through this module; any character with darkvision would also be invaluable.

BACKGROUND

Rutherton is a small village located on the north border of the Duchy of Tehn, and it was once the target of constant raids and harassment by creatures hunting for winter nourishment. For years it suffered the attacks of humanoids and denizens of evil, struggling to survive in a harsh environment.

Fifty years ago, Rutherton was the center of a terrible power struggle, for their cleric of many years had just passed away. The clergy of Pelor then sent a new priest to supply guidance to the villagers.

Narhalm was a young man of much experience. He had adventured for several years, struggling to rid the world of unholy menaces. His retirement in Rutherton was to be a peaceful one, but less than three days after his arrival, he discovered evil brewing in the small village.

The villagers lived in squalid conditions, under the constant harassment of bandits and humanoids. After some investigation, Narhalm identified the local burgomaster as the source of many of the village's troubles. This man, Vargnin, was revealed as a cleric of the dread deity Nerull, and he was responsible for weakening the community with bandit raids so he could eventually sacrifice the entire village to his dark lord without resistance.

Vargnin fled into the nearby mines of Mount Rantoloch when confronted; Narhalm followed fast in pursuit. Deep within the mines, the two met for the final time as an epic battle ensued. During the great conflict, a great rift in the bedrock opened, venting natural gas into the chamber where they fought. Thus, when Narhalm smote Vargnin with holy fire, the gas exploded violently, rocking the mountain and its surroundings. Many in Rutherton thought that perhaps the mountain was in fact a volcano thundering to life, but the rumbling ceased as quickly as it occurred.

Three days later, Narhalm appeared from the mines carrying an elegant silver lantern, in which a holy white flame burned brightly. He told the story of his battle with Vargnin and related that the flame within the lantern would bring peace to the village as along as it shed its light across the village from the chapel's bell tower.

Created in the final battle between Narhalm and himself, the flame sprang from a source born as a result of the conflict deep within the mountain—a holy pyre of good, pure energy. If the flame was ever extinguished from the lantern, it could only be re-lit by returning it to the chamber in which the original font still burned. Narhalm warned the people of Rutherton to be vigilant in the guardianship of the lantern and its flame, which he dubbed the *light of reason*.

Narhalm bid his final farewell and returned to the mines to secure the sacred flame that burned brightly within. He never returned. So the *light of reason* burnt for fifty years, keeping the forces of darkness at bay.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The PCs are fleeing from an oncoming storm and looking for shelter when they see a light burning bright in the distance. The light is the magic lantern

that wards the small village of Rutherton from evil. Here they are drawn into a crisis as the lantern is damaged during the storm and a great dragon threatens to destroy the village. The village cleric asks them to take the lantern deep into the mountain to re-light the holy flame, while the villagers beg the characters to protect them from the dragon that would surely lay waste to their village.

Meanwhile, deep within the mountain, the undead form of the cleric Vargnin lives, plotting his escape from his holy prison and revenge upon the village that thwarted his plans fifty years ago.

The PCs must race against time, making their way past the denizens of the mountain to confront Vargnin and his minions deep within the bowels of an ancient temple. There they must re-light the lantern before the village is attacked by the dragon that waits only for the storm to end.

Only quick thinking allows the PCs to traverse the dangers of the mountain, which has been converted into a prison of evil by the holy flame that burns beneath. They must be quick to stop Rutherton from being attacked and preventing Vargnin from completing a ritual that might snuff the holy flame forever.

FOR THE PLAYERS

The PCs begin the adventure on the road, perhaps returning from a previous adventure or on their way to their next one. They have been wandering in the frontier wilderness for some time when they happen upon Rutherton.

Dark clouds rumble overhead. The storm that has been building for the last few hours begins to spit droplets of rain. The wind steadily picks up as you realize that unless you find shelter soon you will be in for a rough night.

Ahead in the darkness you see a pure white light shining like a beacon in the night. The light seems to have warmth to it that bids you to come in from the cold—an indescribable urge to approach a place of safety and rest.

The attraction the characters feel is the power of the lantern that keeps the evil at bay, and also makes it uncomfortable for any evil creature to approach the village (see the "Light of Reason" sidebar for further information on the item).

If the PCs believe that the light is a trap and approach no further, they suffer the full wrath of the elements. The biggest storm of the year descends upon the area, blowing down trees, striking areas with

lightning, and releasing over 6 inches of rain in the area in one night. Rutherton is located on stable ground and has numerous run-off points to prevent houses from flooding badly and other areas from completely washing away.

ARRIVING AT RUTHERTON

Rutherton was once a small mining community located at the base of a large mountain rich in iron ore. It has no guards itself, but a local militia keeps the peace when necessary. The residents are huddled in the local inn (the sturdiest building in town) when the storm arises. PCs who bang on the door are let in, but frightened villagers might have to be calmed down (via Diplomacy checks—your option) to avoid unfriendly reactions.

A total of seventy people huddle in the crowded taproom or in the guestrooms upstairs, making it a tight fit for everybody there. During the first hour after the PCs' arrival, few people are brave enough to look at them, and only a handful talk to them. The burgomaster, Soon-jee, and a cleric of Pelor, Tatiana, both approach the PCs and ask their business in the village; once it becomes clear they pose no harm the two talk freely. They answer any questions the PCs might have, and Tatiana might even relate the story of the lantern, although many mock it as a fairy tale. It isn't until after an hour that the storm reaches its full strength and the action begins.

A thunderous boom rocks the inn as the storm pulls into full swing outside. Gale force winds threaten to topple the building and demolish the small village, but somehow it all stands firm.

A second boom rocks the building as a great flash of light pierces though the shutters of the inn, lighting the room momentarily. The noise of crashing stone rises above the wailing of the storm as a look of terror spreads across the townsfolk's faces. Tatiana runs to the door and looks out into the raging weather. The cleric glances back, ashen-faced, and waves for you to come over.

The lantern that has hung in the chapels' bell tower for fifty years has just been struck by lightning. It has dropped to the mud and water in the center of town (only 80 feet away), and Tatiana urges the PCs to retrieve it for her. The rest of the townsfolk look on expectantly, too scared by the storm's vengeance to step foot outside. The lantern itself is amazingly only mildly damaged, although it took a direct hit from lightning, but the flame within has been snuffed. Any PCs who attempt to retrieve the lantern must weather the storm raging outside.

Running across to the lantern, they must try to keep their feet and stop themselves from being knocked down or blown away (see the sidebar or page 87 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for rules on wind effects—this is considered a windstorm). As the PCs retrieve the lantern from the mud outside the chapel, another disaster occurs.

As you lift the silver lantern from the mud, a succession of booms rocks the skies above. Chain lightning lights up the skies above, and the dark clouds release a torrent of rain upon you in one tremendous barrage. As the skies erupt, a terrifying sight fills your vision. A long, reptilian shape snakes across the skies, the full length of its crimson body stretching across the dark rumbling skyscape.

The great dragon looks down and breathes a cone of flame towards the village, although its gout of

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

"Beyond the Light of Reason" is intended for four 13th-level characters, but it can be modified for parties of different sizes or levels. Consider adapting the adventure as follows:

• **9th- to 12th-level PCs:** Replace the skum that have been enhanced by the advancement rules with normal-sized creatures, and reduce the levels of NPCs within the mountain. This allows lower-level parties to survive longer. Grant the PCs more time to complete the module, perhaps by allowing Tatiana's *control weather* spell to last another day, giving them time to rest more within the mountain. Lower Vargnin's levels (minimum 11 levels) and give him less powerful magic items. This allows lower-level parties to survive the depths of Mount Rantoloch.

• **14th- to 15th-level PCs:** Increase the numbers of creatures and Hit Dice of existing creatures, and add several levels to existing NPCs. The ogres in the lower mines can be given several levels of warrior and better equipment (perhaps +1 weapons), give the grimlocks more levels in warrior or barbarian, and allow Vargnin to summon more creatures before the PCs reach the temple. Increase the damage on all traps within the dungeon (an extra few dice of damage, adding +2 or +3 to all DCs). Also, grant Vargnin the phylactery that he needs to reform after being slain. Vargnin should always be two levels higher than the PCs at the beginning of the adventure, giving the PCs a sufficient challenge when they finally meet him.

Remember that changing the Encounter Levels should alter the amount of treasure in the adventure. Consult page 170 in the *Dungeon Master's Guide* (**Tables 7-2**, **7-3**, and **7-4**) to determine treasure appropriate to the new encounters.

fire falls far short of the ground. Lightning strikes continue, allowing you to watch as it struggles through the storm and into the mountain range to shelter from the storm.

Firing missile weapons is pointless in the storm; the dragon is flying over 400 yards away and has no intention of stopping to fight in this weather. Instead she seeks refuge in a cave further up in the mountains. The cave is located deep within the range, but close enough that the dragon can return quickly once the storm has abated.

In the inn the locals are frightened to death; first the storm almost devastates their village, now a dragon threatens to attack! Eventually Tatiana approaches the characters for help, hoping they can save their village.

"You must help us, for without the lantern we shall surely be doomed. The *light of reason* has guarded our village from harm for fifty years, its holy flame preventing evil from harming us. For years the flame stopped evil creatures such as that wyrm from causing us harm, although now with the light dead, it will surely return and deliver its wrath on us. My fellow villagers no longer believe in the power of the flame, and are more scared of the danger that this dragon will bring come morning; however, I believe the lantern can be repaired. The lantern itself is only a little damaged, and if you could take it deep into the mountain where the flame was born you could re-light it and return before the village is harmed. But you must make haste, for without the lantern we have no defense against the creature.

The source of the flame resides in the heart of Mount Rantoloch. Please, help us!"

Although this might sound like a massive task to the PCs, Tatiana can supply them some equipment to assist them. The equipment she offers includes the remains of the adventuring treasures she collected over the years. She requests that anything the PCs do not use during the course of the adventure they return so the items can aid the village in the future:

- *potion of cure moderate wounds* (×2)
- *potion of neutralize poison*
- *potion of cure light wounds* (×3)
- *potion of hiding*
- scrolls of *cure serious wounds* (×3) and *cure critical wounds*
- *pearl of power* (3rd level)

If the PCs are in need of more assistance, Tatiana also has a scroll of *control weather* that she offers to use to extend the storm. She is loath to do this however, as extending the storm damages the village and surrounding farmlands further. If the PCs do not return by midnight of the following night, she tells them that she will then cast the spell.

Creatures (EL —): Tatiana is a young cleric who settled in Rutherton five years ago after leaving adventuring life forever. She is a small redhead in her mid-twenties who wears simple blue dresses. She is thin and comely, but has never had time for men and rejects advances.

Soon-jee is an elderly man who has lived in Rutherton most of his life. He is tall and carries an air of respectability, although he spends most of his time resting his injured left leg. Soon-jee was once a well-known ranger of the area until his leg was crippled by the touch of a wraith.

Tatiana, Female Human Clr5 (Pelor): CR 5; Medium-size Humanoid (5 ft., 5 in. tall); HD 5d8+5; hp 30; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 12, flat-footed 14; Atk +2 melee (1d6–1, light mace); SA spells, turn undead; AL LG; SV Fort +7, Ref +5, Will +9; Str 8, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 16, Cha 16.

Skills: Concentration +4, Diplomacy +7, Heal +11, Knowledge (religion) +6, Spellcraft +3. *Feats:* Brew Potion, Scribe Scroll, Craft Wand.

Possessions: +2 leather armor, +2 cloak of resistance, wand of detect evil (20 charges; command word "Hedgel"), light mace.

Spells (5/5/4/3, base save DC = 13 + spell level): 0—*detect magic, light, detect poison, guidance, virtue*; 1st—*protection from evil*, shield of faith, bless, detect undead, remove fear*; 2nd—*aid*, lesser restoration, spiritual weapon, speak with animals*; 3rd—*magic circle against evil*, searing light, protection from elements.*

*Domain spells. *Domains:* Good (good spells cast at +1 caster level; Healing (all healing spells cast at +1 caster level).

Soon-jee, Male Human Rgr3: CR 3; Medium-size Humanoid (6 ft., 2 in. tall); HD 3d10+6; hp 28; Init +3; Spd 15ft (due to injured leg); AC 11, touch 9, flat-footed 11; Atk +2 ranged (1d8+2/crit ×3, mighty composite longbow [+1 Str]); SA favored enemy (orcs), two-weapon fighting ability; AL LG; SV Fort +5, Ref +0, Will +3; Str 12, Dex 8, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 14, Cha 13.

Skills: Animal Empathy +4, Handle Animal +5, Hide +1, Intuit Direction +7, Knowledge (nature) +4, Move Silently +2, Ride +2, Swim +1*, Wilderness Lore +6. *Feats:* Track, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Improved Initiative.

*Includes penalty for weight of gear carried.

Possessions: leather armor, mighty composite longbow [+1 Str] with 15 *+1 arrows*, dagger.

Ad-hoc XP Award: Give the PCs a story award of 500 XP for braving the storm to retrieve the lantern.

MOUNT RANTOLOCH

Before the battle between the two clerics, Mount Rantoloch was an important mining colony that was the lifeblood of the village and its environs. Several large veins of iron ran through the mountain, and although it should have made the villagers quite wealthy, most of the profits were stolen by brigands and raiding humanoids.

For the last fifty years, the villagers have not returned to the mines because of the many sightings of dangerous creatures haunting the tunnels. Those that did enter to restore the old mines never returned. The creatures spotted include a small tribe of grimlocks that has taken up residence in the caverns.

The mountain itself is a highly magical area due to the presence of *Pelor's pyre* deep within its bowels (see sidebar). Imprisoned within it are many creatures that could overwhelm the village easily. Any creatures that might be able to break through the magical barrier produced by *Pelor's pyre* must then contend with the power of the *light of reason*. Consequently, none of the inhabitants of the mountain have mustered the courage to leave their lair, break the enchantments of the mountain, and assault the village in force. Now that the *light of reason* has been extinguished, however, it's only a matter of time until they discover the weakness and exploit it—yet another motivation for the PCs to undertake the mission (feel free to have Tatiana share this information if the PCs seem reluctant to head into the mountains).

A jagged road climbs the mountain toward the mines, timbers intended to secure mining carts and keep them from rolling down the mountain are ragged and worn. It takes the PCs 2 hours to climb near the entrance to the lower mines, and an extra hour to reach the upper entrance. In addition, the narrow pass that once led to the external lower entrance was blocked by a massive landslide after the clerics' battle. Tatiana warns the PCs of this before they leave Rutherton, telling them it would be quicker to ascend to the upper entrance, then make their way into the lower mines through there. Tatiana tells the PCs that within the mines they should look for an entrance to an ancient temple to Pelor. Within its halls they will find the source of the *light of reason*; she doesn't know on which mine level the temple can be reached.

THE UPPER MINES

Dungeon Features: In the upper mines, many fallen boulders, rubble, and loose rocks confront the PCs. Characters fighting in melee in chambers obstructed by such terrain must succeed at a Balance check (DC 10) every round of combat or fall prone.

Cold Dangers: The upper mines in Mount Rantoloch are cold and icy. The miners who once worked on the mountain dressed warmly and lit braziers filled with a smokeless alchemical compound to heat non-work areas. The current denizens of the caverns either cope with the cold or use similar methods. The PCs might not be so prepared. The characters must make a Fortitude save (DC 15, +1 per previous check) or sustain 1d6 points of subdual damage. PCs can be furnished with warm clothing in Rutherton, but only if they think to ask (the citizens don't think to offer).

U1. UPPER MINE ENTRANCE

This large cavern smells of fire. Rubble lies haphazardly about the chamber and the far wall is badly charred as if a huge blast of flame had scorched that area recently. On the far side of the cavern lay several corpses; each looks like it once stood over 15 feet tall.

On the floor near the stairs (marked **B**) lie the bodies of three giants. All three have been burned badly and torn beyond recognition. PCs who have had experience with frost giants before recognize them (although the fact that they're giants is fairly obvious). The three giants confronted the dragon Kah-la-hi when she sheltered from the storm on the way to her lair in the mountains; after a savage battle, she slew both of them and gnawed at their bodies for most of the night. Since her wounds were still fresh, she broke free of the *Pyre of Pelor's* power and returned to her lair to heal herself before she attacked the village.

Kah-la-hi is currently traveling to a minor lair nearby. When she returns she is fully healed and ready for trouble. It takes her 7 hours to fly through the storm to her lair. She then rests for 8 hours and heals herself. After preparing herself with magic items from her lair it takes her another 5 hours to survey the area before she attacks. Any PCs deep within the mountain complex when she returns will be horrified when they surface to see Rutherton ablaze with dragon fire.

If the PCs await her return she fights them first, sitting atop the mountain and swooping past while strafing them with dragon fire, spells, and magic items. If the PCs flee, refusing to fight her, she heads straight for the village. It takes the PCs too long to head down the side of the mountain after her unless they can fly or *teleport* to the village.

Kah-la-hi is a very old red dragon of great power. During the Greyhawk Wars she served with Iuz the Old in his armies, assisting the orc hordes in the Vesve forest. After the Flight of Fiends she though the Old One was weak and losing power, so she fled to the east to lair anew. Her exact statistics have not been listed because she has a greater interest in destroying the village and returning to her lair with food than actually confronting the PCs in battle.

U2. THE GATHERING CHAMBER

This large chamber contains a large hewn shaft that delves deep into the mountain's core. A small river filled with large pieces of ice rushes under a small wooden bridge and tumbles down one side of the shaft; far below you hear it striking rocks clearly. A large metal pulley system lays mangled to one side of the shaft. Several broken mining carts lie about the south wall.

At the beginning of winter, a small hunting party of frost giants reached Rutherton. Seeing the small town as easy pickings, they decided to sleep in the upper mines for the night before attacking the next day. During this time they succumbed to the power of the pyre. Of the group now only one remains; the rest died, mostly of starvation. The leader and his pets lair nearby, although they rarely enter this room anymore.

The chamber contains several things of interest to the PCs. A spiral staircase descends the side of the shaft for 300 feet (although the PCs must walk through the waterfall and succeed at four Balance checks, DC 10, not to fall) to area L1, and cave paintings adorn the western wall.

The painting depicts a crack in the ground that spews flames high into the sky. A horde of hellish abominations shy away from it while a dark figure watches. Other paintings are too faded and worn to comprehend.

Near the painting lay two large skeletons. These are the remains of frost giants killed and eaten weeks ago. PCs who succeed at a Search check (DC 15) find a loose rock in the wall, behind which they discover the giants' meager possessions.

Treasure: Within the large hole rest two large sacks containing all of the giants' worldly goods. Sack #1 contains several large, badly carved bones, a short sword, two large fur blankets, a small empty keg, an iron flask containing a *potion of levitate,* seven bloodstones (70 gp each), 69 gp and 238 sp. Sack #2 holds a broken heavy crossbow, a large fur blanket, a large drinking horn, four golden pearls (120 gp each), eight nuggets of silver (30 gp each), a masterwork dagger, a *potion of water breathing,* a small wrought golden bracelet (60 gp), 12 pp, 79 gp, and 312 sp.

U3. REFUSE REMOVAL ROOM (EL 8)

A set of crudely hewn stairs leads down into a cave that has seen little use lately. Rubble fills most of the chamber and cobwebs cover the ceiling above.

This room was once used to remove the miner's refuse after they decided that throwing it into the stream would pollute the drinking water in the lower mines. An old rusted lever is located (marked **A**) near the far end of the cave; it triggers the mechanism that opens the trapdoor that allows refuse to be tipped into the shaft. Old age, combined with the explosion that rocked the mountain, has made this room extremely dangerous; anyone who pulls the lever (requiring a Strength check, DC 16) triggers the trap.

When the minor earthquake shook the mountain, the rock beneath this room shifted, opening a shaft that stretches across the majority of the chamber. When the mechanism is activated, the device causes the entire floor to crumble and fall into the shaft, tumbling 100 feet down to the bottom. To make things worse, rocks shake loose from the ceiling and tumble down atop anyone trapped in the shaft.

Traps: Detecting the trap in this room is a little different than normal, and anyone falling victim to this

NEW MAJOR ARTIFACT: THE LIGHT OF REASON

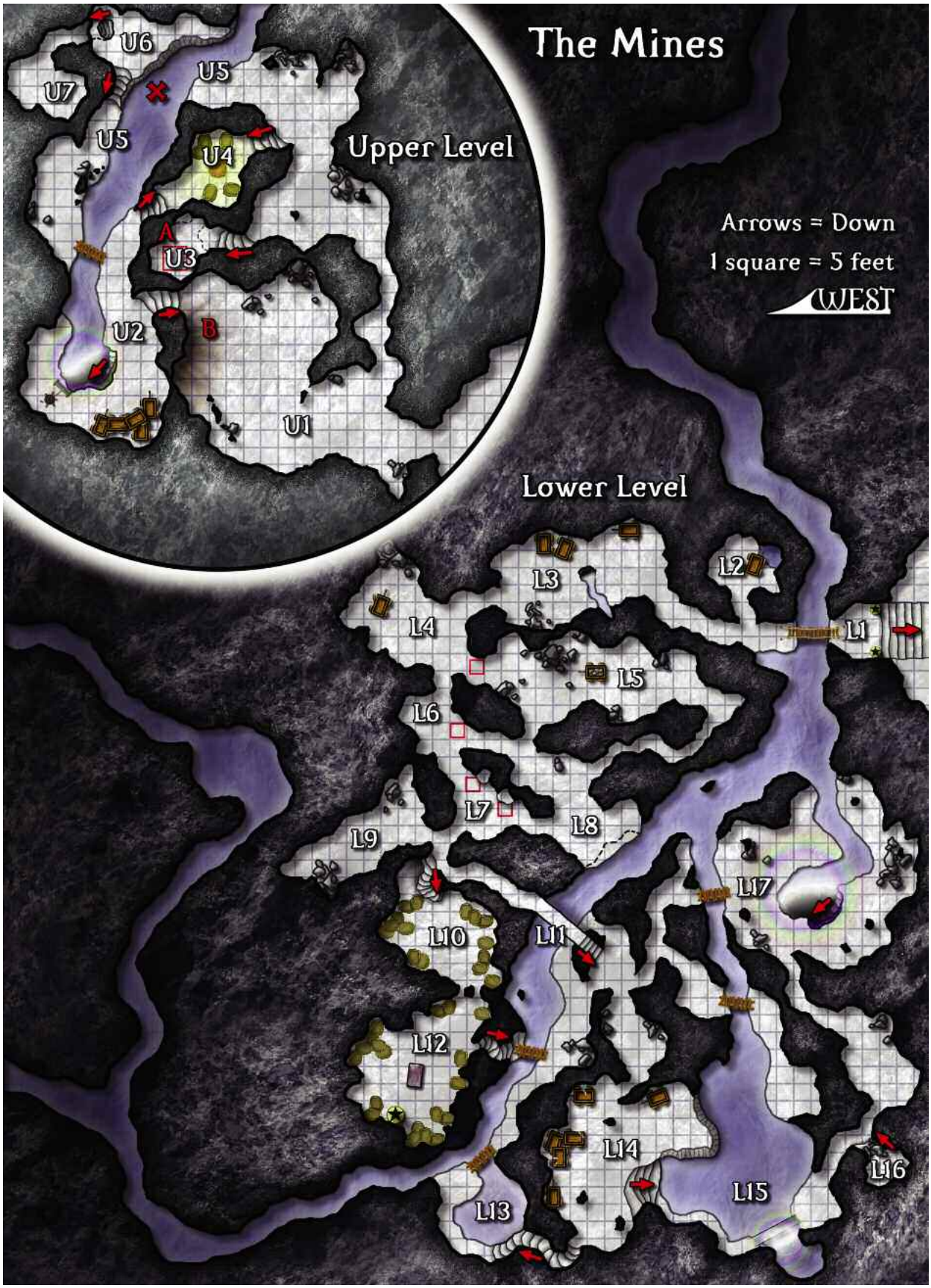
The cleric Narhalm crafted a silver lantern and lit it with a holy fire of Pelor fifty years ago. Holding the receptacle of the flame has little effect, granting the bearer the effects of a constant *magic circle against evil* spell. But if it is placed on ground *consecrated* by a cleric of Pelor, in a place where it is clearly visible, it radiates a *forbiddance* against evil effect in a one-mile radius (creatures need not see the flame to be affected). An evil creature must make a Will save (DC 30) to enter the *forbiddance* zone. The light also emits an *antipathy* effect against creatures of evil alignment in the same one-mile radius. So even creatures that manage to push through the *forbiddance* feel a strong sense of unease and a reduction of their Dexterity scores (see the *Player's Handbook,* page 175).

Finally, the light grants all good creatures within one mile a +2 morale bonus to saving throws and doubles their normal rate of healing. A cleric of Pelor can also call upon the light to emit a *searing light* spell three times per day. Each cleric of Pelor can access this effect, so more than three *searing light* spells can be drawn from the light per day (only one per round), but a single cleric can call upon only three. The cleric must have line of sight to both the target and the *light of reason,* the *light of reason* must have line of effect to the target, and all normal modifiers to AC (such as cover) and concealment still apply. The light uses the cleric's ranged attack bonus to make such an attack.

The *light of reason* can only be created (or recreated) from *Pelor's pyre;* only one *light of reason* can exist at a time. A *light of reason* can only be held in a receptacle of pure silver built to hold a flame (such as a lantern or brazier).

A *light of reason* can only be snuffed by total immersion in earth or water. The light grants its receptacle immunity to all forms of damage, magical or mundane, as long as it remains lit.

Caster level: 20th; *Weight:* 2 lb.


The Mines
Upper Level
Lower Level
Arrows = Down
1 square = 5 feet
WEST
U1
U2
U3
U4
U5
U6
U7
A
B
L1
L2
L3
L4
L5
L6
L7
L8
L9
L10
L11
L12
L13
L14
L15
L16
L17

room is in for a terrible surprise. A dwarf with stonecunning can search for the trap.

Pit Trap: CR 7; no attack roll necessary (10d6); Reflex save (DC 20) avoids; Search (DC 25); Disable Device (DC 26).

Falling Boulders Trap: CR 5; +20 ranged (6d6); Search (DC 22); Disable Device (not possible). *Note:* The rocks strike all characters in the shaft or clinging to the remains of the chamber.

U4. THE CHIEFTAIN'S CHAMBER (EL 13)

This large cave has seen recent use. Fur beds line the walls and a large fire smolders in the center of chamber. Over the fire cooks a kind of meat you do not recognize, but the stench of it almost overcomes you.

The frost giant leader, Arisngraurd, and his pets have settled in this room. The leader is a minor cleric of Thrym (the frost giant deity) and has recognized the mountain's effect on his party as magical and spends most of his waking hours pondering what to do about it. He knows he is not powerful enough to break it. When the dragon arrived, Arisngraurd decided he wished to parley with it, but after the deaths of the rest of his band he doesn't know where to begin. The dragon's absence has allowed him time to think, although the sheer size of the creature has him more than a little worried.

In the cave, Arisngraurd sleeps with his hunting dogs, a pack of winter wolves he uses to track his prey. The winter wolves were the first to succumb to the mountains' magic.

Creatures: The warband leader is a powerful foe who uses his hounds to back his advances. If attacked, the giant believes the dragon is using *charmed* creatures to clear the narrower areas of the tunnels and fights with utmost ferocity.

Arisngraurd, Male Frost Giant Clr3: CR 12; Large Giant (cold); HD 14d8+84 plus 3d8+18; hp 160 (194 with *endurance* cast); Init +4; Spd 40 ft.; AC 23, touch 9, flat-footed 23; Atk +23/+18/+13 melee (2d8+15, Huge masterwork greataxe), or +12/+7/+2 ranged (2d6+10, rock); SA spells, rock throwing, rebuke undead; SQ rock catching; AL CE; SV Fort +18, Ref +5, Will +11; Str 30, Dex 10, Con 22, Int 10, Wis 14, Cha 12.

Skills: Climb +14, Concentration +8, Jump +14, Knowledge (religion) +2, Spellcraft +2, Spot +8. *Feats:* Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack, Sunder.

Spells (4/4/3; base save DC = 12 + spell level): 0—*detect magic, light, detect poison, cure minor wounds;* 1st—*magic weapon*, shield of faith, entropic shield, cure light wounds;* 2nd—*spiritual weapon*, endurance, cure moderate wounds.*

*Domain spells. *Domains:* War (Weapon Focus—greataxe), Destruction (smite 1/day for +4 attack and +3 damage).

Possessions: scroll of *dominate animal, stone shape,* and *remove curse*, masterwork huge greataxe, huge chain mail armor, and a holy symbol of Thrym. Arisgraurd also owns a large sack where he keeps his personal belongings. Within lies the corpse of a sheep, three polished ogre skulls, three blankets, two *potions of lesser restoration,* a longsword, a silver ewer (60 gp), seven tourmaline (120 gp each), a fire opal (1,200 gp), 32 pp, 168 gp, and 430 sp.

Winter Wolves (2): hp 49, 55; *Monster Manual* 184.

Alpha, Male Winter Wolf (1): CR 5; Large Magical Beast (cold); HD 9d10+27; hp 75; Init +6; Spd 50ft.; AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 16; Atk +12 melee (1d8+6, bite); SA breath weapon, trip; SQ scent; AL NE; SV Fort +9, Ref +7, Will +4; Str 18, Dex 15, Con 16, Int 9, Wis 13, Cha 10.

Skills: Hide +7, Listen +9, Move Silently +11, Spot +9, Wilderness Lore +1*. *Feats:* Alertness, Improved Initiative.

*Their natural coloration grants winter wolves a +7 racial bonus to Hide checks in areas of snow and ice. A winter wolf has a +4 racial bonus to Wilderness Lore checks when tracking by scent.

Possessions: +2 ring of protection (pierced through his ear), a black leather collar studded with eight bloodstones (950 gp).

See the *Monster Manual* page 184 for winter wolf special attacks and qualities.

Ad-hoc XP Award: Alpha is a larger than normal specimen of his species; consider him a CR 7 monster for the purpose of awarding experience.

Tactics: Arisngraurd is extremely paranoid after the appearance of Kah-la-hi and believes that the PCs are agents of the dragon, sent into the tunnels to destroy the inhabitants of the mountain. It takes a great deal of diplomacy to calm the giant, and PCs that do so will still be a target of the cleric's constant paranoia.

In combat, Arisngraurd orders his wolves to attack immediately while casting *endurance* and *entropic shield* on himself if he has the time. He enters combat fiercely, taking no quarter and expecting none in return.

Development: Arisngraurd does not flee from combat and hunts the PCs through the upper mines if they try to escape. He is passionate about hunting the PCs down both to prevent them from escaping the complex and to use them as food. If the PCs befriend Arisngraurd somehow, he talks of large groups of creatures that war in the lower mines, and of a force of great power that lures the unwary to this mountain, enchanting them all to stay forever.

U5. THE ICY STREAM

A small underground river runs quickly before you, the current carries large chunks of ice downstream. Both sides of the river rise 3 feet above the surface of the icy water.

Although the river is dangerous, nothing hostile lives within it. If any PC decides to dive into the river and risk frostbite, hypothermia, drowning, (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide* page 85–86) and perhaps even being forced down the waterfall at area **U2**, he might see a skeleton weighed down at the bottom of the river if he succeeds at a Spot check (DC 18).

Twelve years ago, a cleric of Pelor visited Rutherton to determine the fate of Narhalm. While he stood near the river, a piece of rock broke away and plunged him into the icy depths here.

PCs who retrieve the body of the cleric can attempt to cast *speak with dead*, or even *resurrect* the corpse. A *true resurrection* is needed to bring the man back to life (he has been dead several years), although a *speak with dead* spell might grant a wealth of information.

The cleric's name was Rathicar, and he was sent from Greyhawk to the village by the clergy of Pelor. He has the following information to relate, should the proper questions be asked:

- Rathicar traced Narhalm's steps into the mountain and delved deep within the mountain's caverns.
- Deep in the cave system, the cleric saw a set of stone doors that were locked by an intricate system of rotating circular locks.
- Nearby, Rathicar witnessed spawn of the underworld working within an infernal forge.
- The Pelorite also spotted some of these same creatures conversing with a walking rotting corpse. The undead spotted Rathicar hiding and summoned a creature to hunt him down. He managed to escape, only to fall prey to a natural trap on his way out of the caves.

If the PCs have the means to bring Rathicar back to life, he is considered a standard 6th-level cleric of Pelor (see page 51 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide* for complete statistics).

Treasure: Upon the skeleton of the drowned cleric is a badly rusted set of half-plate armor, a silver holy symbol of Pelor, a small golden wedding band engraved: "May our love shine forever" (30 gp), a small leather pouch containing six jaspers (80 gp each), a +2 *heavy mace*, and a sealed vial containing a *potion of heroism*.

Ad-hoc XP Award: Rathicar belonged to a minor noble family that lives outside the city of Dyvers. If the PCs take time to recover and return the body to them, they are rewarded with 500 gp each. Also award the PCs 500 XP for his recovery and final rest.

U6. MANTICORE LAIR ENTRANCE

Within this cave, a rock shelf looks across a flowing stream of ice, and a section of the ledge crumbles into the water as you enter the chamber. On the far-left side of the cave a tunnel has been cut into the floor, and crude stone steps descend into it.

When the PCs enter this chamber, there is a 50% chance that 1d2+1 of the manticores in area **U7** climb the steps to investigate the new smell. They immediately take flight and shower the PCs with spikes from the opposite ledge. If the fight goes poorly, they attempt to bull rush PCs close to the edge into the river, and they roar to attract the rest of the pride in area **U7**.

U7. THE MANTICORE LAIR (EL 10)

A sloping tunnel turns smoothly into a small cave where piles of bones lay pushed against the far wall. The stench of refuse is strong here.

The manticores that live here were unable to leave the mountain and subsequently made these caverns their home. When they hunt, they fly through the shaft at area **U2** and feast upon the creatures of the lower mines.

Creatures: The manticores are growing weaker through hunger after the frost giants in area **U2** killed three of their pride a few days ago. Two more attempted to leave the mountain but were killed by the dragon early this morning as she left (the bodies were taken as snacks to eat as she flew).

Manticores (5): hp 50, 53, 55, 60, 65; *Monster Manual* 130.

Tactics: The manticores use their spikes to soften the party up before entering melee combat. Once engaged, they attempt to flank the most dangerous PCs. If the battle goes poorly, they fly out of the opening if possible and flee across the river to area **U5** to regroup. If trapped, they fight to the death.

Development: Any escaping manticores attempt (and fail) to leave the mountain. From there they fly to area **U2** and flee down the shaft. Here they rest on ledges, licking their wounds. If the PCs use the shaft to enter the lower level, they have to fight the manticores on a narrow staircase. There the creatures attempt to pull them off the ledges and let them plummet to their deaths.

Treasure: Several skeletons of miners lie in this cave, along with the bodies of orcs and hobgoblins. The accumulated possessions the creatures have collected include: a masterwork chain shirt, twenty large nuggets of silver (20 gp each), a silver razor with an ivory handle caved with rampant elephants (350 gp), an alexandrite (590 gp), 482 sp, 612 gp, and 10 pp.

THE LOWER MINES

Dungeon Features: The lower mines contained the richest deposits of iron in the mountain and were heavily mined before the battle beneath the mountain. Only days before it was abandoned, many miners discovered new veins of ore and began uncovering them before they were slain by allies of the lich lord. The tunnels here vary from 8 to 12 feet tall while the caverns reach heights of up to 30 feet.

This section of the mines is home to a small tribe of grimlocks. The currently battle the minions of an aboleth for control of the area. Once alerted to the party's presence, they are informed by their leader (a slaad summoned by Vargnin to control the creatures) to slay the PCs using any means necessary. These encounters are meant to weaken the group's resources as they move through the mountain toward their goal. The grimlocks are weak creatures compared to the PCs' level and quickly adapt to use tactics designed to counter the PCs' strengths and abilities. Since they have only the one night to reach the pyre, these constant encounters will frustrate, annoy, and finally tax their strength.

Unless the PCs managed to bypass the blocked crevice leading to the external lower mine entrance, they arrive at area L1 by following the stairs down from area U2. Clever PCs who do avoid the upper mines altogether shouldn't be penalized for conserving their energy and resources for the battles ahead.

L1. ENTRANCE TO LOWER MINES (EL 7)

The long stone steps lead up to a hewn stone entrance. Two worn statues of armed and armored warriors stand on either side of the opening, stone swords raised high. Through the entrance you can see a rope and wooden bridge spanning a large gap in the floor.

The rope bridge spans a small river of near-freezing water that runs through the mountain. Lurking below the bridge in the water waits a group of skum controlled by the aboleth in area **L17**.

Creatures: The skum are the spawn of an aboleth that is trapped within the mountain. The creatures are positioned here to ambush newcomers (and bring them back for food) before the other denizens of the mountain get to them.

Advanced Skum (6): CR 2*; Large Aberration; HD 6d8+18; hp 50; Init +0; Spd 20 ft., swim 40 ft.; AC 14, touch 9, flat-footed 14; Atk +11 melee (2d6+8, bite), +9 melee (1d4+4, 2 claws), +9 melee (1d6+4, 2 rakes); SQ darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; AL LE; SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +5; Str 27, Dex 11, Con 17, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 6.

Skills: 28 Climb +14, Hide +3*, Listen +7*, Move Silently +5, Spot +7*. *Feats:* Alertness, Multiattack.

*Skum receive a +4 racial bonus to Hide, Listen, and Spot checks underwater

Tactics: When PCs attempt to cross the bridge, the skum burst out of the water to smash planks and tear at the bridge's ropes. If one PC crosses at a time, they attack the character wearing the most metal. Once they have dragged at least one person beneath the water, they attack mercilessly until their captive is slain and swim off with the corpse to feast.

Development: The skum flee in the face of heavy resistance, but they swim to other areas of the mines to warn the other skum of the food approaching. The survivors of this group might attack anyone approaching the edge of the river in other parts of the mine.

Ad-hoc XP Award: These skum are larger specimens than normal; consider them CR 6 monsters for the purpose of awarding experience.

L2. TOOL STORAGE

The cave walls here are lined with old wooden brackets and rusted mining tools. Moisture drips down the east wall, forming a small pool at the base of a large cart. Cobwebs cover the entrance to a set of stone stairs, and rats scuttle across the floor into cracks in the northern wall.

This cave was once used by the miners to store their smaller tools when they returned to the village for the night. All of the tools here are badly rusted and the wooden handles are rotted, but the mining cart is in barely usable condition.

L3. OUTER MINES

This cavern contains visible signs of a mining operation. Broken carts line the walls, which also hold empty iron sconces. A small opening in the south wall lets a small stream of water dribbles into the center of the room and through a hole in the floor.

The stream that runs through the chamber is a small offshoot of the river system that runs through the mountain. As the water passed through the cavern walls in the complex, it wore away at a deposit of toxic chemicals. Anyone drinking from the water risks contracting blinding sickness (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 75).

L4. MORE OUTER MINES

The mines continue into this chamber, revealing small, unmined veins of iron in the west wall. Several humanoid bones poke out from beneath a broken mining cart, and a pile of picks and pry-bars rest in a pile nearby.

The bones are the remains of some of the miners who were caught when the grimlock clan entered the mines after the clerical confrontation. Any attempt to *speak with dead*, or other similar spiritual communication, reveals only that the miners believe that large, dark-skinned demons surged though the mines, killing everyone in sight.

L5. A GRIMLOCK TRAP (EL 2)

A longer mining chamber stretches before you, and old ladders and scaffolding line both sides of the cave. One mining cart, filled with hewn rock, rests in the center of the chamber. Small patches of iron ore can be seen clearly in the walls of the mine.

The miners who once worked here built pit traps in some of these chambers as a means to slow down invaders of the mines should they be attacked. As such, detecting and disabling them is more difficult than a finding a "normal" pit trap.

Trap: If the PCs enter the chamber by the west entrance, a pit trap could plunge the leading characters into a deep crevice in the floor. This room shows signs of constant use; a successful Track check (Wilderness Lore, DC 20) reveals that humanoids have been passing through here often. Their tracks also give away the location of the pit trap.

Pit Trap (40 ft. deep): CR 2; no attack roll necessary (4d6); Reflex save (DC 20) avoids; Search (DC 28); Disable Device (DC 28).

Development: If any PCs fall into the pit, they are automatically detected by the grimlocks in area **L6** who prepare an ambush for the characters there.

L6. A GRIMLOCK GATHERING (EL 11)

PCs approaching this area who make a fair amount of noise alert the grimlocks in the caverns. The creatures then prepare to ambush the intruders.

Trap: Like area **L5**, this room holds a pit trap that serves as more of an inconvenience to PCs of this level than an actual threat. The real danger in the room lies in the room's other denizens.

Pit Trap (40 ft. deep): CR 2; no attack roll necessary (4d6); Reflex save (DC 20) avoids; Search (DC 28); Disable Device (DC 28).

Creatures: PCs who fall prey to the pit trap in the chamber must deal with six grimlocks who throw alchemist's fire from their hiding places near the small tunnel running from area **L5** to **L8**. Others are charged by four more grimlocks hiding near the entrance to area **L7**. If the PCs put up a good fight, the grimlocks retreat skillfully past the pit traps in area **L7**.

Grimlock Ftr4 (6): CR 5; Medium-size Monstrous Humanoid; HD 2d8+4 plus 4d10+8; hp 45; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 17; Atk +11 melee (1d8+4/crit ×3, battleaxe) or +7 ranged touch (1d6+2, alchemist's fire); SA blindsight; SQ immunities, scent; AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +3; Str 17, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 6.

Skills: Climb +10, Hide +16*, Listen +6, Search +5, Spot +6. *Feats:* Alertness, Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (battleaxe).

*A grimlock gets a +10 racial bonus to Hide checks when in mountains or underground. This bonus is factored into the above statistics, since these grimlocks are only encountered in the mines.

See page 114 in the *Monster Manual* for grimlock special attacks and qualities.

Possessions: flask of alchemist's fire ×2, studded leather, masterwork battleaxe.

Grimlock Ftr3 (4): As above, except the charging grimlocks carry no alchemist's fire.

Tactics: PCs who detect the trap have to move around it if they wish to engage the fire throwers. When the first PC is halfway across, the grimlocks hurl fire at their feet. Other grimlocks attempt to bull rush PCs from hiding either into patches of alchemist's fire or into the pit trap using their Improved Bull Rush feats.

Development: If the grimlocks are attacked by magic or engaged in melee, they flee into the mining complex to warn their kin.

L7. ENTRANCE TO THE GRIMLOCK LAIR (EL 12)

Trap: Each entrance to this area is trapped with another pit trap. High above the pits, two ledges allow the grimlocks here to look down at all intruders. When PCs attempt to carefully negotiate the traps, the creatures hurl large stone clubs down at them (see Tactics below). Any victims of the traps find themselves likewise pelted with rocks and possibly alchemist's fire from grimlocks who have fled from area **L6**.

Pit Trap (2): CR 2; no attack roll necessary (2d6); Reflex save (DC 20) avoids; Search (DC 28); Disable Device (DC 28).

Creatures (EL 8): The grimlocks send two messengers into the complex to the south if the tribe has not yet been alerted. It takes a full round for the messengers to lower and climb down rope ladders into the chamber before they can escape. The attacking grimlocks hide on their ledges and throw stone clubs at intruders.

Grimlock Ftr4 (8): CR 5; Medium-size Monstrous Humanoid; HD 2d8+4 plus 4d10+8; hp 45; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 17; Atk +11 melee (1d8+4/crit ×3, battleaxe) or +7 ranged (1d6+2, thrown clubs); SA blindsight; SQ immunities, scent; AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +3; Str 17, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 6.

Skills: Climb +10, Hide +16*, Listen +6, Search +5, Spot +5. *Feats:* Alertness, Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (battleaxe).

*A grimlock gets a +10 racial bonus to Hide checks when in mountains or underground. This bonus is factored into the above statistics, since these grimlocks are only encountered in the mines.

See page 114 in the *Monster Manual* for grimlock special attacks and qualities.

Possessions: studded leather, masterwork battleaxe.

Tactics: Each of these grimlocks hides next to a small pile of four stone clubs (broken off stalactites and stalagmites). They hurl them at enemies below until they are engaged in melee or run out of clubs. Once their numbers are reduced below half, one grimlock runs to area **L8** to warn the rest of the tribe, while the remaining grimlocks draw their battleaxes and fight to the death.

L8. THE GATHERING CHAMBER (EL 5)

A fast river surges past the cavern here. A ledge on the far side of the room overlooks a 15-foot drop into the dark icy water. Many old tools are scattered across the floor and old scaffolding covers the walls.

Trap: The ledge overlooking the river is extremely unstable due to years of erosion. If any weight more than 100 pounds is placed upon the ledge, it collapses into the icy water where the current washes it downstream and out of these caverns.

Weak Ledge: CR 5; no attack roll necessary (1d6); Reflex save (DC 20) avoids; Search (DC 28); Disable Device (N/A). PCs attempting to pull themselves out of the river before getting washed to area **L12** (the river's speed is 20 feet) must make a Swim check (DC 15) to reach the wall and a Climb check (DC 25) to climb back into area **L8**. PCs who fail the Swim check by more than 5 could begin to drown. See the *Dungeon Master's Guide* page 85 for details.

L9. SILVER VEIN

The floor of this cave is covered in human bones, many of them still clutching the tools they once held in life. From the western wall a jagged stripe of metallic color shines in the light.

This was the last area mined by the villagers only days before they were killed. The western wall shows evidence of a small vein of silver; any PC who makes an Appraise check (DC 18) knows that the silver is quite pure and if mined would fetch enough money to make the village a thriving mining town again.

Treasure: Several nuggets of silver are buried under the rubble in this cave. A Search check (DC 20) or a successful Spot check (DC 25) results in the discovery of 3d6 silver nuggets (each worth 1d3×5 gp). Mining the vein itself would result in enough silver to create thousands of silver pieces.

L10. GRIMLOCK LAIR (EL 12)

A set of crude stairs leads down into a large cavern where a strong stench offends your nose. Across the floor several large bones have been scattered and a great deal of excrement covers the floor of the cave. Dozens of fur mats and sleeping areas are scattered about the area.

This chamber is the main living area of the grimlock tribe. The majority of the creatures eat and sleep here, although the leaders usually gather in a nearby cavern to receive their orders from the tribal elders.

The grimlocks here defend their homes with ferocity and the barbarians rage as soon as the PCs enter. The others assist their brethren while their children escape through small tunnels at the rear of the cave.

Creatures: This area is one of the two lairs for the grimlock tribe. Although roughly thirty grimlocks lair here, only a few are trained combatants, while the rest include nonclassed grimlocks and grimlock children.

Grimlock Bbn4 (6): CR 5; Medium-size Monstrous Humanoid; HD 2d8+4 plus 4d12+8; hp 55; Init +1; Spd 40 ft.; AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 18; Atk +12 melee (1d12+4/crit ×3, masterwork greataxe); SA blindsight, rage 2/day; SQ immunities, scent, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC); AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +3; Str 18, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 9, Wis 8, Cha 6.

Skills: Climb +11, Hide +16*, Listen +6, Search +4, Spot +3, Wilderness Lore +3. *Feats:* Alertness, Weapon Focus (greataxe).

*A grimlock gets a +10 racial bonus to Hide checks when in mountains or underground. This bonus is factored into the above statistics, since these grimlocks are only encountered in the mines.

Rage (Ex): While raging the grimlocks' statistics change as follows: hp 67; AC 16, touch 9, flat-footed 17; Atk +14 melee (1d12+6/crit ×3, masterwork greataxe); SV Fort +7, Will +5. The barbarians' rage lasts for 7 rounds.

Possessions: studded leather, masterwork greataxe.

Grimlock Ftr4 (5): CR 5; Medium-size Monstrous Humanoid; HD 2d8+4 plus 4d10+8; hp 45; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 17; Atk +11 melee (1d8+4/crit ×3, battleaxe); SA blindsight; SQ immunities, scent; AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +3; Str 17, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 6.

Skills: Climb +10, Hide +16*, Listen +6, Search +5, Spot +6. *Feats:* Alertness, Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (battleaxe).

*A grimlock gets a +10 racial bonus to Hide checks when in mountains or underground. This bonus is factored into the above statistics, since these grimlocks are only encountered in the mines.

See page 114 in the *Monster Manual* for grimlock special attacks and qualities.

Possessions: studded leather, masterwork battleaxe.

Grimlocks (11): 11 hp; *Monster Manual* 114.

Grimlock Children (6): CR 2; Small Monstrous Humanoids; HD 1d8; hp 4; Spd 20 ft.; AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 13; Atk +2 melee (1d3+1 subdual, unarmed strike); SA blindsight; SQ immunities, scent; AL NE; SV Fort +0, Ref +3, Will +1; Str 12, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 6.

Skills: Climb +6, Hide +15*, Listen +4, Search +4, Spot +2. *Feats:* Alertness.

*A grimlock gets a +10 racial bonus to Hide checks when in mountains or underground. This bonus is factored into the above statistics, since these grimlocks are only encountered in the mines.

Tactics: When the PCs enter the cavern, the grimlock combatants immediately attack, allowing the rest to help the children escape through narrow openings in the south wall of the cavern. The barbarians immediately go berserk, and the entire group attempts to flank, strike and bring the intruders down using overpowering numbers. The noncombatants enter the fight if it goes poorly, although they are poor fighters compared to the trained warriors of the tribe.

Development: Any children escaping through the gaps run to area **L12**, alerting the tribal elders to the danger. They send a scout to peer through the narrow gaps into **L10** and report back. The gaps are very small, allowing only Small creatures with no more than light armor to squeeze through them or anyone who succeeds at an Escape Artist check (DC 30).

Ad-hoc XP Award: Award 50% the normal experience for defeating the grimlock children.

L11. TOLL BRIDGE (EL 9)

A narrow stone bridge spans the underground river and a large chamber below. At the far side of the bridge a set of stone stairs leads down.

As the PCs cross the bridge, a large troll *charmed* by the grimlock leader walks up the stairs to block the characters' path. The bridge is only 10 feet wide, and the drop to the water and chamber below is 30 feet. Dispelling his *charm* accomplishes little, since the troll proceeds to attack the PCs anyway.

Creature: Horace was once a very successful commander of an elite unit of ogres in the service of Iuz. Several weeks ago they spied the village of Rutherton and slept the night in these caverns, resting themselves before the slaughter the morning would bring. During the night, the shaman of the grimlock clan *charmed* him into service while the remaining ogres were captured by the aboleth. Horace now guards this bridge against the ogres that it once worked with; the shaman renews the charm every week to keep the creature on the grimlocks' side.

Horace, Male Troll Ftr3: CR 8; Large Giant; HD 6d8+42 plus 3d10+21; hp 140; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 27, touch 11, flat-footed 25; Atk +17/+12 melee (1d12+10 plus wounding/crit ×3, +2 *greataxe*) and +9 melee (1d6+4, bite); SQ regeneration 5, scent, darkvision 90 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort +15, Ref +5, Will +4; Str 26, Dex 14, Con 24, Int 6, Wis 8, Cha 6.

Skills: Climb +5*, Jump +5*, Listen +5, Spot +5, Swim –17**. *Feats:* Alertness, Dodge, Improved Bull Rush, Iron Will, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (greataxe).

*Includes –4 armor check penalty.

**Includes –26 penalty for weight of gear carried.

Possessions: +1 chainmail, large adamantine shield, +2 greataxe of wounding, and a black dragon leather bracer set with six small rubies (1,200 gp).

Tactics: PCs who walk across the stone arch toward

Horace's guardpost have to fight him on a narrow ledge overlooking a 30-foot drop into a fast-running (speed 30 feet) river. Horace uses his Improved Bull Rush feat to knock PCs over the edge, thinning their numbers as he attempts to lay waste to them with his greataxe.

Development: Horace is heavily *charmed* and currently unable to comprehend much apart from his duty. PCs fleeing might escape if they travel more than 30 feet from the makeshift bridge, although he pursues anyone attacking with ranged weapons.

L12. TRIBAL CHAMBER (EL 13)

A set of crude stone stairs winds up into a large cavern decorated with dozens of skulls that hang above alcoves that dot the walls. Within the alcoves several animal pelts have been used for beds, while crude furs hang crudely as curtains. The center of the room is decorated with a large stone block that has seen use as a table. Leaning against the far wall of the cavern is a life-sized marble statue of a deer, though it has seen better days.

This room is the spiritual center of the grimlock tribe. The tribal leader is a slaad that Vargnin has bound into service, forcing it to clear the mountain of all non-loyal groups. This cave also houses the grimlock tribal leaders, although the slaad has the only true voice in the decision making process. From here the creature plans its attacks on the aboleth's area to the east. Many of the best grimlock warriors meet here with it to discuss tactics.

Creatures: As the PCs enter, the slaad commands the grimlocks to slay the intruders. The grimlock elder (her title is her name) casts *darkness* in the chamber to blind the PCs, but not before the slaad uses its petrifying gaze to disable as many as possible.

Grimlock Bbn4 (3): CR 5; Medium-size Monstrous Humanoid; HD 2d8+4 plus 4d12+8; hp 55; Init +1; Spd 40 ft.; AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 18; Atk +12 melee (1d12+4/crit ×3, masterwork greataxe); SA blindsight, rage 2/day; SQ immunities, scent, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC); AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +3; Str 18, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 9, Wis 8, Cha 6.

Skills: Climb +11, Hide +16*, Listen +6, Search +4, Spot +3, Wilderness Lore +3. *Feats:* Alertness, Weapon Focus (greataxe).

*A grimlock gets a +10 racial bonus to Hide checks when in mountains or underground. This bonus is factored into the above statistics, since these grimlocks are only encountered in the mines.

Rage (Ex): While raging the grimlocks' statistics change as follows: hp 67; AC 16, touch 9, flat-footed 17; Atk +14 melee (1d12+6/crit ×3, masterwork greataxe); SV Fort +7, Will +5. The barbarians' rage lasts for 7 rounds.

Possessions: studded leather, masterwork greataxe.

Blue Slaad: hp 60; *Monster Manual* 166.

Chaotic Variation: As creatures of chaos, no two slaadi are identical. The grimlock leader has darker skin and narrow eyes that grant it a gaze attack like that of a medusa.

Any slaad summoned must be rolled randomly (see Variant Slaadi on page 169 of the *Monster Manual*).

Nas-kargren, Male Grimlock Bbn9: CR 10; Medium-size Monstrous Humanoid; HD 2d8+6 plus 9d12+24; hp 124; Init +2; Spd 40 ft.; AC 22, touch 12, flat-footed 21; Atk +17/+12/+7 melee (1d12+8 plus 1d6 cold/crit ×3, greataxe); SA blindsight, rage 2/day; SQ immunities, scent, uncanny dodge (Dex bonus to AC, can't be flanked); AL NE; SV Fort +9, Ref +8, Will +6; Str 20, Dex 14, Con 16, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills: Hide +17, Listen +16, Search +6, Spot +7, Climb +16, Intuit Direction +6, Jump +11, Swim +17, Wilderness Lore +7. *Feats:* Dodge, Expertise, Mobility, Spring Attack.

*A grimlock gets a +10 racial bonus to Hide checks when in mountains or underground. This bonus is factored into the above statistics, since these grimlocks are only encountered in the mines.

Rage (Ex): When raging, Nas-kargren's statistics change as follows: hp 146; AC 20, touch 10, flat-footed 20; Atk +19/+14/+9 melee (1d12+10 plus 1d6 cold/crit ×3, *+1 greataxe*); SV Fort +11, Will +8. A rage lasts for 8 rounds.

Possessions: +2 mithril shirt, +1 frost greataxe, potion of haste, potion of cure moderate wounds (×2).

Grimlock Elder, Female Grimlock Clr9: CR 10; Medium-size Monstrous Humanoid; HD 2d8+4 plus 9d8+16; hp 80; Init +6; Spd 20 ft.; AC 28, touch 12, flat-footed 27; Atk +12/+7 melee (1d8+3/crit ×3, *+1 battleaxe*); SA blindsight, spells, rebuke undead; SQ immunities, scent; AL NE; SV Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +12; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 10.

Skills: Hide +7, Listen +10, Search +6, Spot +7, Concentration +13, Heal +8, Scry +4, Climb +7, Spellcraft +5, Knowledge (religion) +5. *Feats:* Alertness, Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (battleaxe), Spell Focus (Necromancy).

Possessions: +1 full plate, +1 large steel shield, +1 battleaxe, ring of protection +1, wand of charm monster (10 charges, command word "Ethmigal"), *horn of blasting, potion of blur, potion of fly.*

Spells (6/6/6/5/3/2; base save DC = 13 + spell level): 0—*cure minor wounds, detect magic, purify food and drink, resistance, virtue* ×2; 1st—*cause fear*†, cure light wounds, divine favor, doom, sanctuary, shield of faith;* 2nd—*bull's strength, death knell*†, endurance, sound burst, find traps, cure moderate wounds;* 3rd—*cure serious wounds, deeper darkness, dispel magic, magic circle against good*, prayer;*

4th—*cure critical wounds, summon monster* IV, *unholy blight**†; 5th—*slay living**†, *flame strike*.

*Domain spells. *Domains:* Evil (evil spells cast at +1 caster level), Death (death touch 1/day; see page 163 of the *Player's Handbook* for details).

†Necromancy spells. The base save DC for Necromancy spells is 15 + spell level.

Tactics: Nas-kargren is a fearless warrior and leader of his people. He is the first into battle and the last to leave. He fears no one, although he respects the elder of the tribe. He immediately rages and attacks the strongest-looking opponent, and he doesn't change the focus of his fury until his foe is slain. Once the first target goes down, he uses Spring Attack against "lesser" opponents. If the fight goes badly, he assists his warriors battling any remaining foes who prove difficult to bring down.

If she's given enough time, the elder casts as many preparatory spells as she can. She casts *bull's strength* and *endurance* upon Nas-kargren; just before battle, she then casts the following: *virtue* (on herself and Nas-kargren), *shield of faith, prayer, summon monster* IV (summoning a howler), and *resistance*. She attempts to stay back and cast spells rather than enter combat. If the battle goes badly, she drinks her *potions of fly* and *blur* before attempting to engage a weaker PC in melee. Her first action is to use her death touch domain ability, then commence with attacks from her battleaxe.

Development: If the elder escapes, she attempts to use her *horn of blasting* in a narrow passage to collapse a weakening tunnel structure where the PCs walk. She has no idea that continuing to use the horn risks an explosion, so she uses it as much as needed to try and drive the PCs away or kill them with a cave-in.

Trap (EL 6): In addition to the horn's normal effects, every time the elder uses it in an area, the ceiling might collapse (20% chance). The cave-in is in a 20-foot-diameter within the area of effect. If possible, she uses it at two tunnel endings to trap the PCs within, attempting to asphyxiate them.

Falling Boulders: CR 6; +20 melee (6d6). *Note:* The boulders strike all characters in a 20-foot-radius area.

Treasure: In one of the alcoves that riddle the walls rest three small chests in which the grimlocks store their valuables. Each of the chests is locked with good quality locks (Open Lock, DC 30). Within the chests are the following:

Chest #1: 4,012 cp, 82 sp, six small agates (20 gp each), and three polished dwarven skulls.

Chest #2: 307 sp, thirty-two nuggets of silver (1d4×5 gp each), four tourmalines (100 gp each), six vials of holy water labeled with the symbol of Pelor, and a small piece of iron shaped in an arc with a large metal ball on the end (one of the two keys that grant access to the temple below).

Chest #3: 430 gp, 22 pp, a *potion of levitate*, a *potion of cure light wounds*, a *potion of spider climb*, an arcane scroll of *knock* and *detect invisibility*, another scroll of *fireball* and *detect magic*, and a third scroll of *identify, illusory wall*, and *veil*.

Ad-hoc XP Award: Many of the grimlock encounters result in no experience gains for 13th-level PCs. If the characters successfully negotiate the grimlock lair, award them a bonus story award of 800 XP each.

L13. SKUM LAIR (EL 7)

Several small pieces of ice float in the pond in this chamber. Near the edge of the pond are a flight of crude, narrow stairs that climb up into darkness. A chill fills the chamber, and you can see bones in the shallows of the pond.

Creatures: The pond is currently home to a group of skum that guard the stairs leading into the aboleth's lair through the tunnel above. If the PCs approach the base to the stairs, several groups of large hands reach out of the water to try and pull them underwater to drown.

Advanced Skum (8): hp 50 each; see "Entrance to the Lower Mines" for statistics.

L14. THE OLD IRON MINES (EL 9)

The large cavern slopes upward to the northeast that leads to a ledge overlooking a small lake. Large chunks of ice float atop the water. Wide, hewn steps lead down into a lower area that gives access to the lake's shore easily. The cavern is decorated with large sets of scaffolding, discarded mining tools, and dozens of broken mining carts.

This was the main mining area of the entire complex. This chamber is also where the miners were slain by the grimlocks. Veins of iron can still be seen along the walls of the cavern, although little is left to extract from this chamber.

Creatures: As the PCs enter the chamber, several large ogres hiding both in the shadows of the pillars at the north side of the chamber, and within the tunnel leading to **L14**, assault them. They have been enslaved by the aboleth within the lake and fight to the death without fear.

Ogres (12): hp 30 each; *Monster Manual* 144 except AC 19, touch 8, flat-footed 19.

Possessions: Large chain shirt, large wooden shield, greatclub.

Tactics: The charmed ogres have been instilled with a false sense of invulnerability and ferociously attack the PCs with complete disregard for their own lives. The aboleth is paranoid and has positioned these ogres

here to serve as an early warning device against assassins sent by the slaadi in area **L14**.

Development: The ogres should prove little challenge for the PCs, but this encounter alerts the aboleth in area **L15** to the PCs' presence. During the battle, it swims out into the lake and uses its enslave power and psionics on as many PCs as possible. It also uses illusions to cause the intruders to turn on each other. During any round of combat, the aboleth retreats to its chamber if it believes a PC spots it in the lake.

L15. ABOLETH'S WATERFALL (EL 9)

A cascading waterfall on the south wall fills an icy lake that seems to suck the warmth from the chamber. The water flows slowly to the north, picking up speed as it delves deeper into the mountain. The base of the waterfall barely hides a crude stone bridge allowing slippery access to the other shore.

Behind the waterfall is a cave that sports a small pond. It is home to an aboleth that was trapped within the mountain several months ago as it swam through underground rivers and made its way here. Since then it has *charmed* a group of ogres to do its bidding, bring it food, and attempt to find a way out of its prison.

It has discovered the existence of Vargnin and believes the lich to be the cause of its imprisonment. Because of this it sees the grimlock tribe as a threat (it knows of their alliance with Vargnin) and is using its skum and ogres against them. The aboleth's enslaved ogres currently hold the entrance to the lower chambers, awaiting the lich's return so that the aboleth can meet it and hopefully strike a bargain for its freedom.

The aboleth is not stupid, however. If it believes that it is going to die, or that the PCs can provide an opportunity for escape, it tries to parley. In fact, if the PCs promise to seek out the "dark-robed mystic" (the aboleth doesn't know of Vargnin's spellcasting type—divine or arcane—nor is it aware that he is a lich) and bring him back here to negotiate, it would lend the characters some of its ogre slaves to accompany them deeper into the mine. If the PCs seem to be struggling with the encounters so far, you might consider having the aboleth approach them sooner with the offer of aid in exchange for arbitration with Vargnin.

Creatures: The aboleth and its skum bodyguards lurk within a pool of water in the center of the room. As soon as the PCs enter the room, the aboleth orders its minions to draw the PCs into the pool and assists using its psionic powers.

- **Advanced Skum (6):** hp 50 each; see "Entrance to the Lower Mines" for statistics.
- **Aboleth:** hp 90; *Monster Manual* 15.

Tactics: The aboleth orders the skum to assault the PCs, giving it time to mentally command all the remaining skum to swim to flank the PCs. As the PCs enter its lair, it uses its *project image* ability to provide a fake version of itself amid the skum while it hides behind an *illusionary wall* at the rear of the chamber. The aboleth uses its enslave power to the fullest.

Development: If things go poorly for the aboleth, it attempts to escape, using as many of its servants as needed to slow the PCs as it swims away. After a resounding defeat, the aboleth lays low and does not attack the PCs again, using its powers to avoid them completely if possible.

Treasure: At the base of the pool is a chest filled with silver nuggets (Search, DC 25). It contains 200 nuggets (1d3×4 gp each), as well as a larger nugget that acts as a *stone of good luck*. Scattered across the bottom of the pool are 212 gp, 88 sp, and two small eye agates (10 gp each). In one corner of the room is a small piece of iron shaped in an arc with a large metal ball on the end (the second of the two keys that allows access to the temple—Search, DC 15 to find).

Ad-hoc XP Award: Like the grimlock encounters, most of the run-ins with the skum result in little to no experience gains for 16th-level PCs. If the characters successfully negotiate the skum lair, award them a bonus story award of 500 XP each.

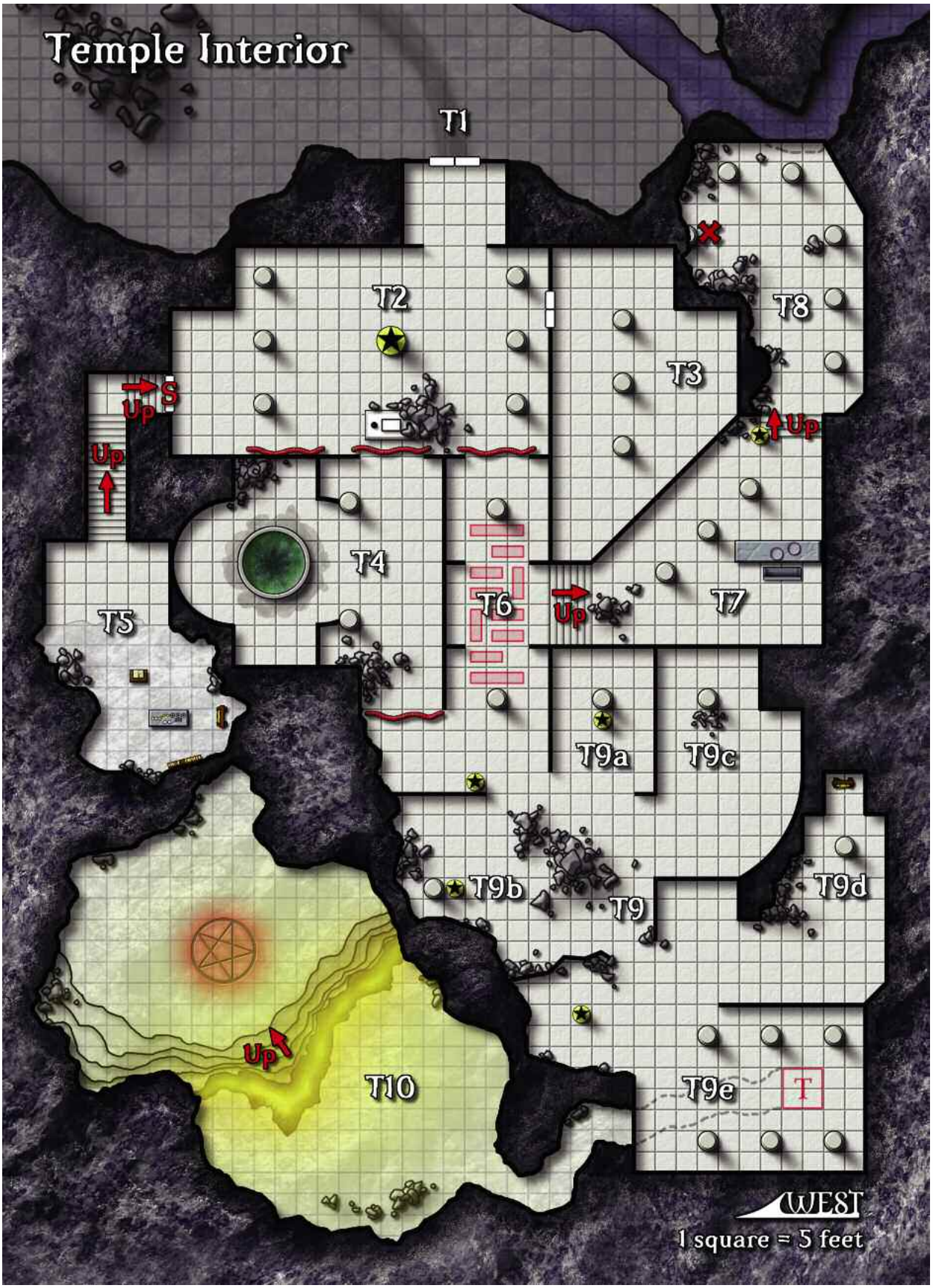
L16. TREASURE

A set of crude stone steps leads into a large pile of rubble that has collapsed in the entrance of another tunnel.

Moving the rocks causes more to fall, sparking a chain of rockfalls that causes the tunnel between areas **L17** and **L18** to collapse. The fall takes several minutes, and the PCs have plenty of time to escape.

The only way into the blocked tunnel is by carefully stabilizing the area with more support beams or magic. Alternatively, a PC can magically pass through the rock into the chamber using spells such as *dimension door, teleport, meld into stone, passwall,* and similar effects. Using mundane techniques to construct a makeshift tunnel requires 4 hours of labor.

The small cave contains several skeletons of dead miners still clutching their tools. A vein of iron can be easily seen on the east wall of the room. But to the south of the vein, a statue has been mostly excavated from the rock wall. The statue is constructed of white marble and depicts a beautiful woman in elegant white robes holding her cupped hands to the ceiling, within them rests a small bird. The base of the statue is set with a copper plaque. Written in an ancient Dwarven dialect on the plaque is the following message:


Temple Interior
T1
T2
T3
T4
T5
T6
T7
T8
T9
T9a
T9b
T9c
T9d
T9e
T10
Up
Up
Up
Up
Up
S
T
WEST
1 square = 5 feet

"Hold your hands where she may see your offering, without the sacrifice that winter brings, spring may never bloom."

Treasure: Although the statue itself is not magical, the bird that rests in its palms is. The bird looks like a small robin but it holds all of the powers of a *figurine of wondrous power, silver raven*.

Feel free to plant some campaign specific, important plot hook or device in the pouches of one of the dead miners.

L17. PASSAGE TO THE TEMPLE (EL 9)

A small stream snakes its way into this large chamber before falling over the lip of a large shaft that leads deeper into the mountain complex. Stalactites and stalagmites are scattered throughout the room, providing plenty of hiding places.

Creatures: The main group of ogres that have been enslaved by the aboleth has camped in this chamber. Some of them have explored the stairs that wind about the shaft, but none have returned.

Ogres (12): hp 30 each; *Monster Manual* 144 except AC 19, touch 8, flat-footed 19.

Tactics: The ogres attack PCs with an unearthly ferocity, completely secure in their magic enslavement that they will be successful. If the PCs have struck a deal with the aboleth in area **L17** and secured aid from its minions as part of some arrangement, six of these ogres follow the PCs wherever they go within the mountain.

THE TEMPLE

Deep within this ancient temple of Pelor stirs the undead form of Vargnin, the cleric of Nerull destroyed by Narhalm fifty years ago. Trapped in his den of evil by a power greater than his own, he has spent the last fifty years fighting the holy flame's powers. Finally able to pierce the barriers of the planes and contact minions of his deity, he then began his unholy plans to break free from the pyre's influence.

Vargnin has been summoning creatures from the underworld to act as his minions, binding them with promises of virgin souls to feast upon once he snuffs *Pelor's pyre*. He also discovered that other evil creatures summoned here by lesser spells did not disappear after the spell's duration expired; they remained trapped by the same effect—*Pelor's pyre*—as that which imprisoned the cleric.

Some of the creatures Vargnin has called to his lair have survived the years of infighting and need for sustenance and live in the depths of the temple today, awaiting their release.

Dungeon Features: The temple itself contains ceilings that reach up to 20 feet high, although many of them have been cracked open, allowing people to see the rock beyond. Every room shows some effect from the earthquake, though none of the areas are unstable to walk through.

T1. TEMPLE ENTRANCE (EL 8)

Long, climbing stairs lead into a large cavern adjoining a small lake. At the far side of the chamber, a large set of stone double doors seem to be carved into the rock wall.

Hiding behind the rubble (marked **A**) is one of the lich's servants, summoned to protect the temple from interlopers. When the PCs pass its position, it attacks the party, attempting to surprise them.

The large stone doors contain two separate, concentric, circular locks that prevent the doors from being opened. They were designed so that both locks had to be opened simultaneously, preventing any but the best of thieves from gaining entry. The doors have also been locked magically; the characters' best bet is to open them with one of the two special keys (found in areas **L12** and **L15**).

Attempting to unlock the doors without the keys is a difficult task, as the locks are of amazing quality and the doors are also *held* and *arcane locked* (Vargnin uses *stone shape* spells to bypass the doors, sealing his passages behind him as he goes). Thus, a single *knock* spell is insufficient to open the doors (as they're held shut by three obstacles), but if a character can pick the mundane locks, a *knock* spell bypasses the two magical wards. Simply using both keys simultaneously bypasses all the barriers keeping the doors closed; using one reduces the Open Lock DC of the doors to 30.

Held and *Arcane Locked* Large Stone Doors: 1 ft. thick; hardness 8; hp 180; Break DC 35; Open Lock DC 45.

Creature: Hidden behind one of the rock slides in the chamber is a forge that a kyton has slowly constructed over several years with the assistance of Vargnin. From this vantage point, the devil watches as the PCs enter, waiting to spring out to attack the intruders.

Advanced Kyton: CR 6; Medium-size Outsider (evil, lawful); HD 12d8+12; 70 hp; Init +6; Spd 30 ft.; AC 20 (+2 Dex, +8 natural); Atk +15 melee (1d8+2/crit 19–20, chain rake); SA dancing chains, unnerving gaze; SQ baatezu qualities, damage reduction 20/+2, SR 17, cold immunity, regeneration 2; AL LE; SV Fort +9, Ref +10, Will +8; Str 15, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 12.

Skills: Climb +18, Craft (blacksmithing) +10, Craft (weaponsmithing) +11, Escape Artist +15, Listen +15, Spot +15. *Feats:* Alertness, Improved Critical (chain), Improved Initiative, Weapon Focus (chain).

See the *Monster Manual*, page 51, for kyton special attacks and qualities and page 50 for baatezu qualities. Note that the Will save for the devil's unnerving gaze is DC 17 due to its increased Hit Dice.

Tactics: The kyton uses its unnerving gaze to appear as Tatiana as it approaches the party, altering the image subtly to make it appear as though the cleric has been horribly tortured. If the PCs fall for the disguise, the creature collapses into the arms of an unarmored or lightly armored PC before animating the chains about its body and attacking its victim. If it is in danger of dying, it uses chains to spike into the roof above it, climbing away into the darkness above where it has a small cave to rest in. From sections of the roof, it might hang over the PCs and animate its chains to attack outside the reach of melee weapons.

Development: The kyton usually does not leave this area, but if it believes the PCs are a serious threat (defeating it in battle would be more than enough) it attempts to warn Vargnin.

Treasure: The devil has had years to practice its smithing; the results of its labor were to equip the forces Vargnin planned to gather after his escape. Dozens of normal weapons are displayed on racks (whichever you see fit), plus the following masterwork items: two greataxes, a greatsword, four daggers, a bastard sword, a dire flail, and two short swords.

Ad-hoc XP Award: Award the PCs 50% more experience for defeating the kyton due to its increased power.

T2. WITHIN THE TEMPLE (EL 8)

The great doors open into a small, domed antichamber before stretching into a large worship hall. Pillars line the left and right areas, while a partially buried altar dominates the far wall. In the center of the room is an ancient statue of a man dressed as a nomad holding high an image of the sun.

The statue isn't particularly remarkable, although a Knowledge (religion) check (DC 10) reveals that it was once a symbol of Pelor, as a character might assume from the raised sun symbol. A closer examination of the statue (Spot DC 20) reveals that the nomadic figure now wears a sardonic smirk on his face (the result of some careful *stone shape* spells), and the symbol of a jagged scythe is carved into his forehead.

Creatures: This room has been adopted by a group of howlers let loose in the temple. As the PCs enter the

room, they don't hesitate to attack the potential sources of food.

The howlers are part of the forces Vargnin summoned to the area in one of his many experiments. They act as guardians to the temple proper, as the kyton is not always at its forge.

Howlers (6): 42 hp; *Monster Manual* 121.

T3. THE SPIDER'S LAIR (EL 6)

Thick cobwebs obscure much of the room beyond the doorway; all you can see beyond the webs is darkness. On the far side of the room you can almost make out a figure that appears to be beckoning to you, whispering names and encouraging you to enter.

Creature: This chamber has become home to Vargnin's consort, a creature called to his side early after his transformation into a lich. He has been distracted for so long, though, that the creature—a half-devil named Suzanelle—has made plans to visit the mines above. Since the PCs opened the doors, she intends to use them for entertainment before pursuing her release.

Suzanelle, Female Half-fiend/Half-harpy: CR 6; Medium-size Outsider (evil, lawful); HD 7d8+14; hp 60; Init +4; Spd 20 ft., fly 80 ft. (average); AC 19, touch 12, flat-footed 17; Atk +11/+6 melee (1d4+4/crit 19–20, +2 *dagger*), or +9 melee (1d6+2, bite) and +4 melee (1d4+1, 2 claws); SA captivating song, spell-like abilities; SQ darkvision 60 ft., poison immunity, acid, cold, fire, and electricity resistance 20; AL LE; SV Fort +3, Ref +9, Will +5; Str 14, Dex 19, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 17.

Skills: Bluff +10, Hide +9, Listen +10, Move Silently +9, Perform (chant, dance, drama, epic, lullaby, melody, opera, storytelling) +8, Spot +10. *Feats:* Dodge, Fly-by Attack.

See the *Monster Manual*, page 51, for harpy special attacks and qualities. Note that the Will save for Suzanelle's captivating song is DC 16.

Spell-like Abilities (Su): 3/day—*darkness, poison;* 1/day—*desecrate, unholy blight.* Caster level 7th; base save DC = 13 + spell level.

Possessions: +3 bracers of armor, +2 dagger, potion of cure moderate wounds, potion of invisibility.

Tactics: Suzanelle initially attempts to captivate as many of the party as possibly, then stabs them to death with her dagger or claws their eyes out with her bare hands. If she only captivates a few targets, she quickly attempts to dispatch them with her *poison* spell-like ability before engaging the rest of the intruders. She has no qualms about escaping and does so if the fight turns against her.

Development: Suzanelle escapes if she can, but she doesn't flee to warn Vargnin of the PCs. Instead she attempts to appear on the other side of the blade trap from the PCs (area **T6**) and tries to *charm* them into crossing to her.

T4. FOUNTAIN ROOM (EL 7)

A beautifully carved marble fountain adorns the center of this room. Cherubs dominate the artwork, but various images of beautiful women are scattered about the mural. The fountain itself spews black bile into the air, the thick goo splattering in the basin below and across the floor.

NEW MAJOR ARTIFACT: PELOR'S PYRE

Pelor's pyre is a magnificent, 40-foot-tall, 10-foot-radius gout of white flame erupting from the earth. The pyre is immobile. The source of the *light of reason, Pelor's pyre* has abilities both similar and different to its smaller offspring.

The pyre's raw powers emanate several different effects. First, it acts as a focused inward *magic circle against evil* in a one-mile radius. Unlike most inverted *magic circles,* this effect traps any evil creatures that wander within its area of emanation. Such creatures can only break free from the *magic circle* if the pyre fails to defeat their spell resistance. Evil creatures trapped by the pyre cannot use any sort of teleportation or extradimensional travel to escape the *magic circle*.

Any evil creature that comes with 30 feet of the light of reason must make a successful Fortitude save (DC 19) or be destroyed (as the *destruction* spell). Creatures who make their saving throws take damage normally, and they feel uneasy in the presence of the pyre and are shaken (see the *Dungeon Master's Guide* page 85), resulting in a –2 morale penalty to attack rolls, weapon damage rolls, and saving throws. Evil creatures exposed directly to the pyre's flames must make another such saving throw, even if they succeeded at the initial one, except this save is DC 30.

Finally, any evil creatures summoned within the pyre's area of effect are likewise trapped by the artifact's *magic circle*. This effect supercedes the normal temporary nature of summoning spells. So an imp summoned by a spellcaster within the pyre's area of influence does not return to its home after the summoning spell used to bring it has expired. Instead, the imp remains, free to move within the confines of the *magic circle,* but unable to leave it. After the duration of the summoning spell expires, summoned creatures are no longer compelled to answer to the summoner. A trapped, summoned evil creature that finds some way to escape the *magic circle* (or if the pyre doesn't beat the summoned creature's spell resistance) is instantly sent back to the location it occupied prior to being summoned.

Caster level: 20th; *Weight:* N/A.

Within the debris in the northwest corner of the room lurks once of the lich's vile servants, a horrible chaos beast that awaits the party to approach the fountain before spewing out of its hiding place to engulf the hapless adventurers.

Creature: As part of one of the lich's dire rituals, he accidentally made contact with a terrible beast of unknown power, this chaos beast. It slipped through into this plane of existence and fought the lich ferociously until Vargnin bound it to this room. He now avoids this area, hoping that it will starve to death; unfortunately, its hunger has driven it insane.

Advanced Chaos Beast: CR 7; Large Outsider (chaotic); HD 16d8+48; 120 hp; Init +4; Spd 20 ft.; AC 16, touch 9, flat-footed 16; Atk +22 melee (2d6+9, 2 claws); SA corporeal instability; SQ SR 15, immune to critical hits, immune to transformation; AL CN; SV Fort +11, Ref +11, Will +12; Str 22, Dex 11, Con 17, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +22, Escape Artist +17, Hide +18, Jump +20, Listen +20, Spot +20, Tumble +18. *Feats:* Dodge, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Mobility, Weapon Focus (claw).

See the *Monster Manual*, page 34–5, for chaos beast special attacks and qualities. Note that the Fortitude save for the chaos beast's corporeal instability is DC 19.

Ad-hoc XP Award: Award the PCs 100% more experience for defeating the chaos beast due to its advanced nature.

T5. LICH'S CHAMBERS (EL VARIABLE)

The stairs lead down into a chamber that has been crudely extended back into the rock at the rear of the room. A large stone altar has been transformed into a laboratory table and a nearby shelf is filled with tomes. In the southeast corner, a large brass gong with a mallet hangs in its bracket. Near the center of the chamber, a large wooden podium holds a large tome bound in pitch-black leather.

This is the lich's study. When the PCs discover this chamber they are too late to stop his research, so destroying the room or its accoutrements achieves little (he is currently in area **T10** performing the ritual necessary to snuff the pyre).

While the lich no longer needs anything in this chamber, he has left a blue slaad to guard what possessions he has from any intruders. When the PCs enter the chamber, the creature summons a cohort from its hiding place beyond the east wall to assist it in battle.

The tome is actually a *book of vile darkness*, granted to Vargnin by the last demon called to his chambers from Nerull's realm. It was intended to grant the lich the power needed to break the enchantment that held him prisoner. Any PC flipping through its pages feels the grasp of Nerull himself upon his or her soul.

Creature (EL 7): Vargnin summoned two slaadi after he discovered that summoned creatures didn't leave after summon monster spells expired. The first now serves as the grimlock leader in the lower mines. The second guards the lich's chambers. Vargnin is cautious; he knows that if any representative of Pelor's church learned of his continued existence he would be hunted down. The second blue slaad stands in the way of any assassins who make it past his grimlock servants.

Blue slaad: 66 hp; *Monster Manual* 166.

Chaotic Variation: As creatures of chaos, no two slaadi are identical. The lich's guardian has large, blade-like claws that deal 3d6+4 points of damage with each rake attack.

Any slaad summoned must be rolled randomly (see variant slaadi on page 169 of the *Monster Manual*).

Tactics: If Vargnin knows of the PCs' approach, then his guardian knows of their presence, as well. The creature immediately attempts to summon another blue slaad to fight the intruders.

Trap (EL 7): An old chest lies next to the slaad's bed. Vargnin stores trinkets that he has not used in his experiments here. The chest is locked with a good lock, and is trapped with a *greater glyph of warding* (see below).

Trapped Chest: hardness 5; hp 15; Break DC 23; Open Lock DC 30.

Greater Glyph of Warding: CR 7; 30-ft. radius *blade barrier* (14d6); Reflex save (DC 19) negates; Search (DC 31); Disable Device (DC 31).

Development: Triggering the trap on the chest is potentially devastating to the PCs. Already on a time crunch, those who make their saves if the *blade barrier* is triggered get pushed back out of the room through the door they entered. The *blade barrier* is slanted at a slight angle such that the low point (at shin level on a human) is near the entrance the PCs used to enter the chamber, and the high point (chest high on a human) is on the opposite end of the room. So characters who trigger the trap and make their saving throw take no damage, but they also end up back outside the room and must reenter the *blade barrier* (forcing a new Reflex save) to pass to the other side of the room. Alternatively, they could wait for the spell to expire, which it does after 140 minutes.

Note the clanging of the blades against the various objects in the room alerts the inhabitants of the next chamber to the presence of intruders.

Treasures: The chest holds 700 pp, six small sapphires (650 gp each), a slender silk glove backed with a fine golden mesh and adorned with five rubies (2,500

gp), and a jade statuette of a coiled blue dragon (1,000 gp). Vargnin also keeps a carved ivory scrollcase with images of tortured elves and chaotic tentacled creatures upon it (worth 200 gp). The case holds divine scrolls of *scrying, control weather, plane shift, commune,* and *helping hand.*

In a false bottom (Search DC 25 to find) is Vargnin's journal, a book that details his unlife of the last 50 years. It details his plans and his lack of a phylactery. He frequently curses his inability to create a phylactery to store his soul, so he may return to unlife if slain.

Ad-hoc Experience Award: If the PCs destroy the book of vile darkness, award them a bonus story award of 500 XP. At your option, destroying the artifact might require a special ritual or quest, in which case you can forgo awarding this experience.

T6. THE GAUNTLET (EL 12)

The corridor that allows access to the augury chamber was trapped heavily by creatures summoned by the lich years ago. Six pressure plates line the area; they cause a flurry of blades to spring from the floor and walls to slice victims apart. If this was not bad enough, as soon as the PCs enter the area (past the first of the plates) a group of spectres rise from the floor to combat the PCs amid the blades. The blades pass through them harmlessly but cause the PCs no end of trouble and danger.

Creatures: When the kyton built its forge, Vargnin ordered the devil to place a deadly trap in this area to decimate any who tried to enter the forbidden areas of the temple (areas **T7** and **T8**). Once the floor was trapped by the whirling blades, the lich summoned a group of spectres to lurk beneath the floor, rising into the corridor to kill anyone or anything (except Vargnin and Suzanelle) that attempts to pass into the augury chamber through the blades. The incorporeal creatures are unfazed and unharmed by the blades.

Trap: Several small plates are scattered around the area, unavoidable if the area is casually strolled across. In order for the trap to be disarmed, each plate must be disabled. While this slow process takes place, the spectres rises through the floor to attack. Ten pressure plates dot the hallway.

Whirling Blades Trap: CR 7; +14 melee (1d8/crit ×3 crit); Search (DC 24); Disable Device (DC 28). *Note:* In any given round, a particular person might be the target of 1d4–1 blades.

Spectres (5): 45 hp; *Monster Manual* 169.

Tactics: While the spectres attack anyone who attempts to cross the trapped floor, they do not stray past the chamber and retreat back into the floor if the PCs pass or flee the area.

T7. AUGURY ROOM

A large stone table decorated with two basins decorates the far wall of this chamber. This room seems to have seen little use—thick dust cakes the floor and cobwebs hang loosely from the ceiling. A second stone bench rests next to the basins, a large hourglass rests atop it. Another statue decorates the base of a second staircase, this one depicting a beautiful woman caring for a wounded deer.

This room was once the augury room of the temple, though it is now a derelict chamber that was abandoned because Vargnin found little use for it.

The hourglass is filled with sparkling metallic dust that measures the passage of exactly 30 minutes. If it is spun in its bracket, a mechanism is activated within the frame that unlocks and opens the trap door in area **T9** (marked **T**). The door remains open for 15 minutes before closing again. If the hourglass is forced, the mechanism breaks, forcing PCs to open the trapdoor through some other means. If a character flips the hourglass over, have the group make a Listen check (DC 25) to hear the grating of the trapdoor in area **T9** as it opens.

T8. NARHALM'S RESTING PLACE

This chamber seems to have suffered under the earthquake fifty years ago; much of the left wall has collapsed, burying most of the room under a large pile of rubble. Leaning against a pillar on the left side of the room is a skeleton dressed in the vestments of Pelor and a set of immaculate armor that shines in the light like a beacon.

The skeleton (marked "X" on the map) is the remains of the priest Narhalm, his body left to rot in the accursed walls of this temple. When he returned to the mountain after delivering the lantern to the townsfolk, he was surprised to see that Vargnin had risen from the grave as an undead creature. Unprepared for another battle, the cleric fell quickly to the dark magic of the lich.

Narhalm managed to drag his dying body into this room and prayed that the curse of undeath not claim him; he never finished his prayer. Vargnin bound his soul to this chamber, forcing it reside in a sort of pseudo-existence within the very stone of the room. Narhalm cannot manifest a physical form or affect the material world in anyway; he can only wait for somebody to free his soul. Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs enter the chamber:

As you enter the chamber, an apparition passes silently through the wall ahead of you. The form of a handsome man glows with a dim radiance, his

insubstantial body wavering in the light. The spirit looks sadly at you, glances once at the skeleton against the far wall, then fades quickly from sight.

Although Narhalm would dearly like to be buried on holy ground, the only thing that shall release him from his bleak eternity is the death of Vargnin. Although the PCs might believe that Narhalm is pointing to the body, wishing that it be buried, he is actually trying to draw their attention to the large mace gripped in the skeleton's bony hand. The mace is a powerful weapon against evil and might prove to be the downfall of Vargnin.

Creature: Narhalm is not a true ghost, but a geist unable to effect the real world in any way but to manifest an incorporeal form similar to that of a ghost. The only way to banish his spirit is with a *dispel good* spell or by slaying Vargnin.

Treasure: The body of Narhalm still bears all the possessions the cleric carried when he died. The lich deliberately left it there, hoping to forget the embarrassment he faced in the eyes of Nerull when he was slain by the cleric of Pelor. The body carries *+1 full plate* armor embossed with decorations of red roses; a masterwork large metal shield; a *potion of cure serious wounds;* a divine scroll of *true seeing, cure critical wounds, prayer, healing circle, find the path, divine power,* and *cure moderate wounds*; and Salinthine, an intelligent *+2 heavy mace of disruption.*

† **Salinthine:** The *+2 heavy mace of disruption* has the following abilities: Int 12, Wis 18, Cha 16, and Ego 15. It can speak Common and Celestial, is lawful good, and grants its wielder use of the Improved Initiative feat and the evasion ability. The mace can cast *cure moderate wounds* (2d8+5 hp) three times per day. The mace has a passionate hatred of undead creatures, and it attempts to convince its wielder to attack all undead creatures in melee in preference to all other actions. Salinthine prefers to be wielded by clerics or paladins and asks any new wielder who does not fit one of these categories to pass it to such an individual's hands as soon as possible.

T9. THE INNER SANCTUM

This inner complex of chambers is decorated with numerous alcoves and statues that cast shadows about the deathly silent room. Pieces of the ceiling have fallen recently, piling rubble about the chambers and creating numerous possible hiding places.

Each of the alcoves once held the temple's greatest treasures, including valuable artwork collected from across the lands. Much of the treasure was destroyed in the battle between Vargnin and Narhalm (and the earthquake that followed), or it has been used by Vargnin in his unholy research. Some of the alcoves still hold items of note.

T9a: A large stone statue of a rearing horse has been molested by inhabitants of the temple as well as by time. Most of its legs have disappeared, and the precious gems that once adorned it have all been pried out.

T9b: A statue of an elegant priest is barely recognizable through the deep grooves and markings that cover it. The figure's hands seem to have once held something of value, although it is long gone.

T9c: The rubble from a shattered statue covers the floor of this alcove. Searching the rubble turns up a curious find: a thin golden chain with a heart-shaped locket attached (250 gp). Within is a picture of a beautiful woman.

T9d: A large bronze gong identical to the one in area **T5** adorns this alcove. If the gong is struck, it's twin rings also, causing the slaad there to become curious (if it still lives) and leave the lich's chambers in search of intruders in this chamber.

T9e: The alcove here seems empty, but a stone trapdoor is hidden in the floor. The PCs must succeed at a Search check (DC 25) to locate it, and an Open Lock check (DC 30) to proceed to *Pelor's pyre*. The trapdoor also opens willingly if the hourglass in area **T7** is turned around.

Trap Door: hardness 8; hp 60; Search DC 25; Break DC 28; Open Lock (DC 30).

T10. PELOR'S PYRE (EL 16)

A massive crack in the center of this cavern emanates a roaring pyre from deep within the bowels of the earth, the flames roaring to the ceiling high above you. The heat in this chamber is almost unbearable, but the white flame that has turned this room into a furnace also emits waves of peace and security.

Creature: As the PCs enter the cavern, the flame ebbs for a moment, allowing them to see the upper ledge where Vargnin is chanting his ritual to snuff the holy flame. He will not be recognizable as a lich without magical detection from this range, as heat waves interfere with vision to that distance (Spotting distances are halved). A successful Spot check (DC 25) reveals only that the figure is exceptionally gaunt, and that he is obviously some sort of spellcaster. If the check exceeds DC 30, the character also notices the holy symbol of Nerull around Vargnin's neck.

Vargnin has just completed his spell, which caused the flames to dim and wane; in 14 rounds, the flame dies and the lich can escape his prison. In order for his ritual to continue to affect the flame, the lich must stay

within his unholy summoning circle for the entire 14 rounds. If Vargnin is killed or thrown from the circle, the spell dies and the flame roars to life once more. As the PCs battle the lich, allow a Spot check (DC 20) to notice his concentrated efforts to stay within the circle. A Spellcraft check (DC 30) reveals that the flame is some sort of holy font that acts as an inverted *magic circle against evil*. A successful Intelligence check (DC 15) following the successful Spellcraft check reveals that the lich is probably bound to the vicinity of the flame as much as the other evil monsters the PCs have encountered in the mines. Finally, another successful Spellcraft check (DC 25) once the PCs reach Vargnin reveals that his circle is probably part of some ritual intended to alter the flame in some way.

Although the cavern is stifling hot, the flame causes no damage to non-evil beings within the cavern. During the ritual it also has no effect on the evil creatures summoned by the lich or the lich himself.

If the PCs have allowed creatures to escape their many skirmishes, eventually word has reached Vargnin of the powerful intruders, and he has prepared wisely by using a scroll of *scrying* in his lair to view the PCs' progress through the mountain.

The lich notices the intruders as soon as they enter and begins to cast spells accordingly, beginning with his *summon monster* spells. The distance between Vargnin and the PCs allows the lich time to prepare for his attack, and he uses his time wisely.

Vargnin, Male Human Lich Clr14: CR 16; Medium-size Undead; HD 14d12; hp 100; Init +2; Spd 30ft.; AC 27, touch 14, flat-footed 25; Atk +15/+10 melee (2d4+5 plus 2d6 unholy damage/crit 19–20 ×4, +2 *keen unholy scythe*); SA fear aura, paralyzing touch; SQ turn resistance +4, DR 15/+1, immunities (cold, electricity, polymorph, and mind-affecting spells); AL NE; SV Fort +9, Ref +6, Will +15; Str 15, Dex 14, Con —, Int 15, Wis 22, Cha 16.

Skills: Concentration +18*, Craft (engraving) +8, Diplomacy +11, Heal +10, Hide +9†, Knowledge (arcana) +14, Knowledge (religion) +12, Listen +16, Move Silently +9†, Profession (burgomaster) +8, Search +12, Sense Motive +14, Scry +8, Spellcraft +5, Spot +16. *Feats:* Combat Casting, Dodge, Spell Penetration, Spell Focus (Necromancy), Weapon Focus (scythe), Martial Weapon Proficiency (scythe).

*Includes the +4 bonus from Combat Casting.

†Includes the –3 armor check penalty for Vargnin's armor.

Spells (6/8/8/6/6/5/5/3; base save DC = 16+ spell level): 0—*detect magic* ×2, *guidance, light, read magic, virtue;* 1st—*cause fear*, divine favor*††, *doom*††, *endure elements, random action, shield of faith, entropic shield*††; 2nd—*aid, augury, bull's strength, death knell*, desecrate*††, *hold person, silence, spiritual weapon;* 3rd—*create food, dispel magic*††, *invisibility purge, magic circle against good**††, *searing light* ×2; 4th—*divine power, greater magic weapon*††, *poison, spell immunity*††, *summon monster* IV, *unholy blight*;* 5th—*flame strike* ×2, *plane shift, slay living*, true seeing*††; 6th—*banishment, blade barrier, create undead*, greater dispelling, harm;* 7th—*blasphemy*, destruction, summon monster* VII.

*Domain spells. *Domains:* Evil (all evil spells cast at 15th-level); Death (death touch 1/day; see page 163 of the *Player's Handbook* for details).

†Necromancy spells. The base save DC for Necromancy spells is 18 + spell level. Note that this includes any spontaneously cast *inflict wounds* spells.

††These spells have already been cast by Vargnin as part of his ritual to put out *Pelor's pyre* or as they move to engage the lich.

Possessions: +3 breast plate; +2 keen unholy scythe; ring of protection +2; wand of contagion (17 charges, command word "Egal"); scroll of *invisibility purge, meld into stone, repulsion,* and *spell resistance; minor cloak of displacement; +2 periapt of wisdom; potion of gaseous form;* a small silver circlet set with twelve moonstones with a central sapphire (8,000 gp).

Paralyzing Touch (Su): Any living creature the lich touches must succeed at a Fortitude save (DC 20) or be permanently paralyzed.

Tactics: As soon as Vargnin completes the ritual and the flames begin to ebb, he immediately casts *summon monster VII* and summons a bebilith to delay the PCs. The next round he follows up with a *summon monster* IV spell, which he uses to bring a howler to join the battle. Once his minions are summoned, he casts *blade barrier, spell resistance* (from his scroll), and *shield of faith*. After the spells are cast, he launches a barrage of ranged offensive spells until he runs out. He makes liberal use of his *energy drain, repulsion, harm, destruction, slay living, unholy blight, searing light,* and *blasphemy* to take out key PCs while they fight his minions or attempt to cross the gap to where he waits. If reduced to fewer than 15 hit points, he uses his *potion of gaseous form* to flee, although this causes his ritual to fail.

Due to the unique creation of his lich form, Vargnin does not have a phylactery, nor has he had the materials to create one during his imprisonment. Should he be destroyed, he cannot reform. He is completely aware of this vulnerability and does not hesitate to flee if the PCs prove a serious threat.

Development: If Vargnin is defeated but not slain, his ritual is ruined. The lich is furious at the interruption and summons as many of his remaining minions into the temple to dispatch the intruders. If the PCs are too strong, he flees to the kyton's small cave in area **T1** to regroup.

If Vargnin's ritual succeeds, he doesn't stick around. He casts *plane shift* and travels to Carceri, Nerull's home plane. Once there, he sets his sights on a return to the Prime Material Plane where he can begin another crusade of death and destruction.

Ad-hoc XP Award: Give the PCs a story award of 1,500 XPs if they successfully save Rutherton and prevent *Pelor's pyre* from being extinguished. If the artifact is destroyed but the town is still saved, award them a story award of 1,000.

CONCLUSION

PCs who reach this point will have been taxed to their limit. The appearance of Vargnin should present a challenge to even the best of groups. Because of Vargnin's lack of a phylactery within the mountain, he does not fight to the death. If he is engaged in a dangerous level of melee combat (such as defending the blows of two fighters) he flees the scene, hoping to perform the ritual another day, by using his *potion of gaseous form* to enter his lair (area **T5**).

Slaying the lich in his lair is a task of no small mettle. Parties that accomplish such a monumental task see *Pelor's pyre* flare into existence once more if it was extinguished, its light filling the cavern. In the flames, the PCs can see the ghost of Narhalm raise a hand in gratitude before fading away.

Lighting the lantern once more is as easy and plunging it into the flames of *Pelor's pyre*. The PC who undertakes this task might be a little wary of being burned, but the pyre harms no one of non-evil alignment. Carrying the lantern back to the villagers of Rutherton, the PCs are met with great joy.

Further adventures in the area could include hunting down the old wyrm Kah-la-hi, who might return to the area and destroy much of the countryside around the village before flying back to her lair. With the constant threat of a dragon, the villages would surely want the PCs to track down its lair and slay her.

If Vargnin is unsuccessful and manages to escape, he surely tries his ritual again as soon as possible (this could hinge on a number of possible events or materials). He summons dozens more denizens to the mines, and if he succeeds, descends with a fury on the land at some point in the future. Ω

Caine says, "I like ducks. They quack, they eat, and they run around chasing people with food. That's my type of animal. I like ducks.

"So, in short, there is little to me past my somewhat morbid collection of ducks and their assorted strange names, and my girlfriend, Alex. This module is dedicated to her, the first person to ask the question: 'Why aren't their any dungeons abandoned in the wilderness that have been dedicated to good?' For her this module was spawned."

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The Ptolus campaign

You run two different weekly campaigns. Why did you decide to do such a crazy thing?

Part of the advantage is that it allows me to play two games a week but only do about 150% of the work (rather than 200%). Because it's the same setting, all the characters are in the same places, all the background events and the NPCs that they run into are very frequently the same. When one group goes to the guy who identifies magic items, it's the same guy that the other group goes to. Not only does that make it easier, but it's fun for me, because it makes for a very dynamic kind of setting. If one group is doing something off in one part of town, they might hear something that the other group doesn't hear about, and if they communicate back and forth, one group is learning stuff about the town from the other group. It makes it all seem much more real and seem like the setting is more alive.

What is Ptolus?

Ptolus is an entirely urban campaign. Well, urban/dungeon in that there are a lot of underground areas underneath this big fantasy city. It's a pretty typical large D&D city with the exception that there are remnants of sort of a Renaissance-level technology left over. There are some firearms and things of that nature, but they're more leftovers than a developing thing. Ptolus is a world in decline as opposed to a world that's getting better (although the player characters are trying to do something about that).

How has running Ptolus for the last few years impacted your game design?

In a lot of very direct ways in that a lot of adventures that have been part of the Ptolus campaign have become published game adventures, such as *Queen of Lies,* from Fiery Dragon, some of the stuff that I've done for the Wizards of the Coast website, *The Banewarrens,* from Malhavoc Press, and *Beyond the Veil,* from Atlas Games.

That's the very obvious and direct way, but in other ways, as I've played the game for these many years, now, I've noticed places where I would say to myself "I wish there was a spell that did that," or "I'm going to make up a cool new magic item for an NPC that does this," and it seems pretty logical that if I see a need for something like that in my campaign, other people are going to see a need for that kind of thing in their campaign. And the same is true for optional rules and things like that, so that sort of material finds its way into the products I write all the time.

Beyond the adventures, have you ever considered doing a more specifically "Ptolus" product?

I get asked for such a product quite often. I post a lot of Ptolus information on my website and have heard anecdotally, particularly with the release of *The Banewarrens*, which does have 5 or 6 pages of Ptolus information in it, that there are people out there running Ptolus campaigns just based off that and the stuff that was on my website.

Is that weird?

That's kind of weird. But cool. These people come to my message boards or email and ask me questions about NPCs or locations in Ptolus because they're running a Ptolus campaign. So there clearly are people who would be interested in such a product and so I would never want to say no, but I know our schedule through 2003 and I'm not planning on doing anything like that.

wizards of the coast

What did it feel like to get to be the guy wrote the DMG for Third Edition Dungeons & Dragons? Did you ask for that?

I know that that's really what I wanted. When they selected the people to work on Third Edition it was not clear at that time that it was going to be "one guy writes the *PH*, one guy writes the *DMG*, one guy writes the *MM*." Those decisions weren't even made, yet. People talk about Monte Cook and the *DMG*, Jonathan Tweet and the *Player's Handbook* and Skip Williams and the *Monster Manual*, but the truth is that for the first two years of the game's development, that wasn't really the way it was at all. It wasn't until pretty late in the process that it became "you have that book, I have this book."

But to answer the question, yes, I wanted to write the *DMG* because playing the game is fun, but I've always been the DM. I love being the DM. When I went to go buy D&D to start up my own game it was 1979, I guess, and I asked them for Dungeons & Dragons at my local B. Dalton and they didn't have that, because of course it wasn't out anymore, but I didn't know. The only thing they had was the brand new *Dungeon Master's Guide*. That was the very first product that I bought, so I still have just incredibly fond memories of the *DMG*.

It was this amazing full circle when we sent the Third Edition stuff off to Gary Gygax and Gary came back and said "Oh, Third Edition seems really cool," but then he kind of raved about the *DMG* a little bit, and that was a really cool full-circle kind of moment because his *Dungeon Master's Guide* was so influential to me.

How has it felt to see the fan reaction to Third Edition?

It's great that response has been so positive. We weren't at all sure that it was going to be. We were given the mandate by the powers that be to make the game the game that it became. Not specifically, but [than-Wizards of the Coast President] Peter Adkison said: "make this a good game. Make this the best game we can make it," so that's what we tried to do. We thought "boy, we sure might be alienating some of the existing fanbase," but it turns out for the most part that was not the case, and that Second Edition players leapt right on board and were with us, and that's really cool.

Having gone through that entire process, what words of advice do you have to the people who will be designing Fourth Edition some time down the line?

The big huge thing that we learned was that D&D players want a really good game and are willing to change and accept change more than we even thought. If there are things I could go back and redo in Third Edition a lot of them probably are the way they are because we were afraid to make too big a change. We called them "sacred cows," things that made D&D D&D and we couldn't change them. I think that Fourth Edition can probably take that idea and go even farther with it.

The differences between First Edition and Second Edition were not very big, and I think that came from a level of conservatism, and maybe at that time that was the right choice to make. I don't know. I think my advice to a Fourth Edition designer is "do what will make a good game."

Malhavoc Press

So you've got a job that most gamers would kill for—to be one of the senior designers of Wizards of the Coast, to help guide the future of the game, to have written the *Dungeon Master's Guide*—and right at the height of all the hoopla you back out and decide to do your own thing with Malhavoc. Why?

The short answer, I guess, is that while working at Wizards of the Coast is cool, there's a level of creative control that an individual game designer, even a senior game designer, does not have, and that's the kind of control I wanted. Not necessarily because I'm a big control freak, but because it can be frustrating sometimes to want to do something but be forced in a different direction because someone else who has a different or higher position in the company wants to go a different way.

There are also advantages to being a small publisher as opposed to the big guy. Wizards of the Coast has to be more conservative in their game products—and by conservative I'm talking about in the rules—than a small publisher does. Wizards has to make sure very carefully that they're not introducing anything that's overpowered and not balanced, and to some extent they've done that. Overall I think they've done a good job.

But as a small publisher, not producing the core that everything else is based on, I can be a little more free to experiment and do something wacky and see how that works and see if people like it.

Do you have an example of the type of thing that you've been able to do at Malhavoc that you wouldn't have been able to do at Wizards?

I've got a type of feat that runs through the Eldritch Might books called eldritch feats. Eldritch feats are sort of like metamagic feats but they don't modify the level of the spell. Instead, they have a lot of requirements at the front end in order for you to pick up the feat: high stats, high level, that kind of thing. It's just a really minor example, but that kind of thing probably wouldn't find its way into a D&D book because Wizards has an idea of what is good and what isn't as far as Third Edition design goes. And I helped develop that, but at the same time didn't agree with everything that came out of it. I guess I'd have to label myself as a little more radical a game designer than Wizards of the Coast, and having my own design studio allows me to exercise a little of that freedom.

Who was Malhavoc?

Malhavoc is the character that I played when I was 14 years old, playing in my friend's D&D game. He was an elf wizard.

Now be honest. How many 18s did he have?
[Guilty laughter.] Like four. He was totally this high-level munchkin asskicker.

Were you proud of him nonetheless?
Oh, yeah. Absolutely.

What was the coolest thing Malhavoc ever did?
Well, he was actually an evil character, and he once tricked all the other characters to sell themselves into slavery to an enemy city so that I could. . . it's a long story, but anyway, I sold the other player characters into slavery.

So naturally when you came to choose a name for your company, you fell upon this backstabbing slaver. . .
Well, mostly it's just because it's a cool name. And little did I know that there's some Canadian rock band named Malhavoc, which we recently found out. And apparently there was some *Superfriends* villain named Malhavoc. . .

Well, two different people invented calculus, so you shouldn't feel too bad.
[Laughs.]

What were your creative and personal goals with Malhavoc the minute you stepped out the Wizards door?
Not at all what happened. I fully intended to make my way as a freelance designer working for other companies. Malhavoc would be just sort of this thing I did on the side. Make a few extra bucks here and there. I didn't expect it to take off. It would just be sort of an outlet for me to do the sort of "weird idea" game design that I've been talking about.

Lo and behold, it really took off and it quickly became clear that both creatively and financially the smart thing to do was to pay attention to Malhavoc and not work freelance for other game companies. That's kind of what it's done. So now my goals have really changed. It's no longer just kind of a lark.

Now my goals with Malhavoc are to focus more on quality than on quantity. We don't put out as many books as a lot of d20 publishers do. We don't work with very many authors. We keep everything pretty close to the vest, and that's because I'm really interested in maintaining a really high level of quality, so that when people pick up a Malhavoc product they at least know that it's not going to totally wreck their game. That the people who wrote it (which is more often than not me) at least know the rules and understand what's going on.

You've worked with Bruce Cordell and Sean Reynolds. Do you have plans to expand the stable of people who write for Malhavoc?
Yes. Skip Williams is going to write an event book for us. I wrote *Requiem for a God*, our first event book, about the death of a god. Bruce Cordell is writing our second event book, which is called *When the Sky Falls*, about a meteor strike. Skip is going to be writing a book called *Cry Havoc*, which is a source-book about introducing a war into your game.

If money and sales were no option in terms of designing a roleplaying game product, what is your ideal product?
That would be the product that I'm working on right now, which is going to be called *Arcana Unearthed: The Malhavoc Handbook*. And basically, what it is is a variant *Player's Handbook*.

It's going to be an Open Game License product that, well, if you remember *Unearthed Arcana*, the old First Edition D&D product, if that book had been a stand-alone product, that's what this book will be. It's not going to have a cavalier and a thief-acrobat in it. It's going to be a *Player's Handbook*, but it's going to have all new races, all new classes, all new feats, all new spells. It'll be a stand-alone book. You can use it instead of your *Player's Handbook*. But if you don't want to do that and you just want to grab three of these classes and this new race and these feats and spells, you can do that, too. So it's usable both ways.

It's going to be a 240-page hardback book, and it will come out at Gen Con 2003. I'm really excited. It's a very, very, interesting game design exercise, because my goal here is to create 11 or 12 new classes that fill all the roles that you want to have filled in a d20 fantasy game but not just have clear analogues of the stuff that's in the *Player's Handbook* and have them all work together and have them all be internally balanced but also be balanced with the original *Players Handbook* stuff.

What's an example of a class role you plan to fill?
There's going to be a character class called the champion. At first glance, the champion would seem to be an awful lot like the paladin, because the champion's thing is that the champion devotes himself to a cause or to another person or to some abstract principle or to a religion and defends that and its causes and beliefs and whatever. So that sort of sounds like a paladin, but the champion is actually quite a bit different because the champion doesn't have to be the knight in shining armor on the white charger. The champion is interesting because, while it's one class, a champion of a particular religion and a champion of death and a champion of the king are all going to be very different sorts of characters.

In fact, that's actually a model that I'm playing with a lot. Another class that I'm working on is called the totem warrior. The totem warrior is sort of this outdoorsy almost barbarian or ranger kind of guy except that he chooses a totem animal and gets different class-based powers based on the animal that he chooses. So a bear totem warrior is actually going to be fairly different than a snake totem warrior.

Not all the classes are based on that model, but one thing that's cool about that model is that it allows the DM to say "in my campaign I want there to be the bat totem." I might not provide the bat totem, but it will be really easy for the DM to create his own totems or rules for being the champion of something that I didn't think of.

Will the book similarly revisit the combat rules?

Yes. The core Open Gaming System is going to be the same, but I am going to be making some changes to even the combat rules and the magic rules. Particularly to the magic rules. It'll be someone's option. You could use the straight open system right out of the normal *Player's Handbook* and still use all these classes, but I've got some different rules for how to handle certain combat situations and grappling and some of the classes and the things that they do kind of bring about new combat options.

What are your hopes for the book? Do you hope other companies will do support material once it's out there and open?

I have no idea. I haven't seen anybody really embrace that level of the d20 license or the Open Gaming License. There have been collections of spells and prestige classes and whatnot, and I guess there's some officially licensed *Dragonstar* things, but I am going to make it, from an open license point of view, very easy for someone to write an adventure using the classes and the new things that I'm presenting.

What else is ahead for Malhavoc?

We're going to come out with a book called *Malhavoc Handbook II*, which will essentially be monsters and magic items but it will also be some other things that will sort of supplement the *Malhavoc Handbook*.

The *Player's Handbook* implicitly has a setting that goes along with it where wizards prepare their spells ahead of time and there are clerics who pray for spells and there are these sets of gods and people use longswords and whatever. Even if you don't know anything about Greyhawk, there's a set of assumptions there. The same will be true with the *Malhavoc Handbook*, but they'll be different assumptions, in some ways very different assumptions. The core assumption is the same: that it's a fantasy world where people use magic and swords. But there will be different assumptions. So there will be a world, a setting sort of implied.

Malhavoc Handbook II, which will be called *The Diamond Throne*, will give a little more information about that setting for people who want to get into that. I'm not really interested at this time in having a big setting, you know "this is our Forgotten Realms" kind of thing. But it'll be enough of a backdrop for people who want to use the races and classes that I've created for the *Malhavoc Handbooks* in the setting that I'm going to use while I playtest and create the races and classes. It'll provide that sort of information.

Next year we're also going to come out with a book called *Chaositech*, which is sort of a weird amalgamation of magic and technology but not really either. *Chaositech* is really kind of weird techno devices that are powered by chaos, so they work in strange ways and produce strange effects that don't necessarily need to be bounded by the laws of physics, so it's almost like technological magic.

Sean Reynolds is going to be doing more character books like the one that's out now, and he's also going to be doing a big book dealing with angels, including information about playing angels. On the much closer horizon, Bruce Cordell has written a big psionic classbook called *Mindscapes* that will be out in the spring.

Into the Future

Where do you think d20 and the Open Gaming Movement will be in two years?

I think that in a couple years we'll probably see some of the players in the d20 industry change. A lot of people predict that a lot of small game publishers will drop away, but I think that's actually pretty unlikely. Those are the guys doing it because they love it. They aren't out to make a lot of money. The people who are out there churning out products interested in making a lot of money at this I think in two years are going to start to see that they aren't making as much money as they want and may very well try to do something different.

I'm not a prognosticator enough to know details, but I get the feeling that some of the people putting out d20 products right now probably won't be doing so in two years.

Do you dare prognosticate further ahead than two years?

In five years I expect I'll still be working on Malhavoc. In 10 years, I'll probably be doing something entirely different. That may be just a personal thing. That may be because the industry will change. I don't know. I go back and forth on that all the time, because who knows? In five or six years there might be a Fourth Edition, and Fourth Edition might completely revitalize things the way Third Edition did and keep things going. I don't know. I think, ultimately, it's almost foolish to try to predict that far in the future. So many times in my own career I've predicted "oh, I probably won't still be in gaming in two years." I'm going on year 15, here.

I think that the industry is in a really great place right now. I'm very upbeat about the industry as a whole. I see product quality, pretty much by everybody, increasing, sometimes by leaps and bounds. I think that good products, even from other companies, encourage people to buy more products. That means that customers who get a good product from someone else are more likely to buy my products as well, so I'm thrilled to see other companies produce quality stuff. It's a great time to be a gamer.

I've heard a few people wonder if the 80s were gaming's golden age or if this is gaming's golden age, and I'm starting to lean more toward this being gaming's golden age. If you've got a D&D game going right now and you want to incorporate an assassin in your game, you now have four or maybe five different assassin classes to choose from. You can really have the game you want to have, and I think that's pretty cool.

GeneTech

A Polyhedron Mini-Game of Gene-Enhanced Espionage

Design: Rich Redman
Editing: Erik Mona
Art Direction/Graphic Design: Kyle Hunter
Cover: John Van Fleet

Interior Artists: Jeff Carlisle · Tom Fowler · Mikael Noguchi
Michael Huddleston · Chris Trevas

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Inside GeneTech
Chapter 2: Characters
Chapter 3: Adventures

This Polyhedron d20 System Mini-Game requires the d20 Modern rulebook to play. Polyhedron Mini-Games adapt the standard D&D or d20 Modern rules and conventions to nonstandard settings and genres. Unless specifically noted in the text, this Mini-Game follows the core d20 Modern rules. If you know how to play d20 Modern, you'll pick up the rules of this game in moments. Mecha Crusade utilizes game mechanics developed for the new Dungeons & Dragons game by Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Richard Baker, and Peter Adkison and is based on the d20 Modern *Roleplaying Game*, by Bill Slavicsek, Jeff Grubb, Rich Redman, and Charles Ryan. This Wizards of the Coast game contains no Open Game Content.

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Based on the original Dungeons & Dragons game by Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson.

Michael Huddleston

Introduction

Special Agent Neil Siller waited in the dim basement of the meth lab. Normally a bust like this was DEA territory, but the street said the gang running the house worked for the organizatsiya, the Russian mob. Neil's employer, the INS, believed the organizatsiya had a small number of moreaus, hard-core veterans of conflicts in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Korea, Mongolia, and the Ukraine. The new man running this drug den, Ilya Petrosky, had clear signs of orca in his chromosome cocktail. That made it INS business.

Junkies groaned or giggled around Neil as they enjoyed their fix. The place reeked of vomit and worse. The meth gang didn't bother to furnish more than a few rotting mattresses. Neil huddled in a corner, pretending to drowse and trying to be forgettable. Agent Sergei Leonid had volunteered for the inside job, but their boss, Special Agent in Charge Thomas Tse, pointed out the dogs kept by the front door to sniff out moreaus. Neil took comfort knowing that Sergei would come to get him, since the bear moreau could practically knock in the armored front door bare-handed.

Outside, SAC Thomas Tse waited in a battered, nondescript GMC cargo van. Unlike Neil, Thomas wore body armor and carried both a Colt Double Eagle pistol and an HK MP5 submachine gun. Behind him, Agent Leonid tried to remain still, since shifting his weight rocked the van and bruised the other four agents hiding there. Computers rode in pockets on the back of their body armor, wired to various devices around their bodies, including their wrap-around sunglasses. As the rest of his team took positions, an unmanned aerial vehicle about the size of a seagull circled above the block. SAC Tse's computer projected the UAV's transmissions in his sunglasses. Earlier reconnaissance with peanut-sized robot vehicles called "Beetles" pinpointed Petrosky's fourth-floor room. As Thomas watched via the UAV, Agent Ian Davies reached the roof of the building across from Petrosky's window and began setting up his Barrett Light Fifty sniper rifle. Davies was on loan, a token gesture of the DEA's interest. Thomas knew Davies was a veteran of countless skirmishes on the Mexican border and had high confidence in him.

When the DEA sniper was in place, Thomas squirted a "go" signal, using the keypad on this left forearm and the cellular transmitter in the computer. He, Leonid, and the four agents burst out of the van and charged the drug den door while agents at City Light & Power cut the electricity to the block.

When the few lights went out, the guards started shouting in Russian. Neil charged the lone punk watching the junkies. A frank born with lowlight vision, Neil could see before the gangbanger's eyes adjusted to the dark. Knocking him out with a single mikazuki *kick to the jaw, Neil took the punk's Colt 1911 and shoved it in his waistband. Snatching the dropped Mossberg shotgun, Neil headed for the back stairs.*

Even on the first floor, Neil could hear Davies' sniper rifle punching half-inch diameter slugs into the brick and mortar of the building. As long as the DEA agent kept Petrosky bottled up, they had a chance of success. An explosion heralded the arrival of the rest of the team. Neil pounded up the back stairs, making liberal use of the shotgun. The shouts of "INS! Get down!" faded as he headed for the fourth floor. He hoped the 12-gauge would be enough to arrest 300 pounds of furious, trapped orca.

Campaign in Brief

GeneTech, a complete campaign setting for the new *d20 Modern roleplaying game*, adds some science fiction to the techno thriller genre, offering a dark, gritty, and desperate tone to your modern era adventures. Conflicts are torn from the headlines of local and world news. Heroes in a GeneTech campaign believe that they are among the last good people willing to act against the greed and lust for power which they see all around them.

In GeneTech, genetically modified soldiers clash on blood-soaked battlefields, spies scuffle in the shadows, and organizations blur the lines between crime and corporations. Forty years of intense genetic research and experimentation have produced the first generation of moreaus, blends of humans and animals, and franks, genetically altered humans. (Moreaus are described on p. 247 of the *d20 Modern roleplaying game*. Franks appear later in this article.) Most of these genetically altered humans resent their status as property of their creators, and many have sought political asylum in the United States. Faced with prejudice from so-called "normal" humans, many have turned to crime to eke out a living.

GeneTech heroes have the training, ability, and determination to oppose the corporate greed and government apathy destroying their world. The heroes take on this daunting, deadly challenge because somebody has to, and because they didn't fight to escape genetic labs and military training camps just to watch the world circle the drain.

Most people would rather turn on their televisions, open beers, and ignore the warning signs all around them. Pills, booze, and mass media entertainment numb the majority enough to keep the world functioning. Those who try to expose the dangers caused by overpopulation, pollution, depletion of resources, and overwhelming greed face ridicule, scorn, arrest, or far worse at the hands of those who profit from the status quo.

The Heroes' Role

GeneTech characters are intelligent and resourceful, with human weaknesses and foibles. They are not super-human. They are Jack Ryan (*Hunt for Red October, Patriot Games, Clear and Present Danger*) or Indiana Jones (*Raiders of the Lost Ark, Temple of Doom, Last Crusade*), not Conan or the Terminator.

The heroes escaped from a top-secret genetic engineering facility and now must turn their paramilitary skills to making a living while their former masters hound their every step. The heroes may be defectors or refugees, or escapees from a US development facility. They may have defected out of horror at something their former government was doing, or out of a desire for the greater freedom available in the United States. Either way, their former comrades and co-workers now hunt them and the general public regards them with prejudice and suspicion. In the United States, the government denies any military genetic engineering facilities and handles all escapes with discretion and the utmost secrecy. Other governments only deny that such escapes ever happen.

Political unrest, widespread access to weapons of mass destruction, and environmental collapse all contribute to a sense of impending change. Your heroes can affect the outcome of that change, and they find sympathy and support among those groups who have decided peaceful protest is too little, too late. Your heroes are active. Regardless of their motivations, they take action. Even when improving their own personal situations, they find themselves resolving situations with larger implications.

d20 Modern Rules in GeneTech

GeneTech uses none of the FX rules from Chapter Ten of the *d20 Modern roleplaying game*. Instead, it combines cutting edge, high-tech equipment and genetically engineered characters.

The most significant difference between GeneTech and other *d20 Modern* campaign settings is that players build characters using the moreaus found in on p. 247 of the *d20 Modern roleplaying game* and the franks found on p. 30 of this article. That means the characters themselves are the results of genetic engineering. You can design new franks and moreaus using the guidelines offered in the Creating New Races section of Chapter 2: Characters in the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Occasionally let your characters take a break from fighting government agencies, international ecoterrorists, and street gangs to hunt monsters in the sewers. Use monsters from Chapter Eight: Friends and Foes of the *d20 Modern roleplaying game* as genetic aberrations and failed experiments. Things like bugbears, deinonychus, gargoyles, gnolls, goblins, kobolds, minotaurs, monstrous flytraps, monstrous spiders, ogres, replacements, trogolodytes, and trolls easily fit the bill as results of genetic science run amuck. With a little imagination, you could even tweak fiends, flesh golems, and vampires to fit the bill. Note that in every case, these monsters are from this world, and speak at least one of this world's languages (see the Language Groups sidebar in Chapter Two: Skills of the *d20 Modern roleplaying game*).

Chapter 1: Inside GeneTech

GeneTech is, first and foremost, a techno thriller setting. A techno thriller is a thrilling, fast-paced story set in the present day. Techno thrillers have highly complex plots with a strong sense of urgency that makes the audience (your players) want to rush to the end. In addition, technology plays a key role in the plot and in almost every scene. It is so vital to the plot that if you removed the technology, the plot would collapse. More than just some object the heroes try to acquire, technology is a character in itself. The weapons, equipment, and tools are as interesting as the heroes using them. GeneTech layers secret government development of genetic engineering on top of those traits.

Three Key Traits

Take the real world, add these three twists, and you've got a ready-to-populate campaign setting that's as familiar to Gamemasters and players as our own world, and as fantastic and terrifying as your own imagination can make it. Here's a brief look at how these conceits work in the campaign.

Genetic Engineering Works: In the world of GeneTech, genetic engineering has proceeded far beyond recombinant Bovine Growth Hormone (rBGH) and genetically engineered medicines. Governments use the humanoid results of these experiments as their shock troops, commandos, and spies. Those that escape their government masters find work "off the books" in corporate espionage and crime.

A gang of rat moreaus run a meth lab and terrorize their slum neighborhood. Egg franks (see Franks, below) use tiny robots for a jewel robbery crime spree. A gigantic albino alligator haunts the sewers and waterfront after scientists performing illegal genetic experiments face a government raid. A multinational energy corporation sends deniable canine moreau agents to provoke a war, stopping construction of a Central Asian oil pipeline. These threats and more slip around the fraying edges of society.

Escape is Possible: Moreaus and franks can, and do, escape. An Underground movement helps them find their way to a United States that denies any creation of such beings and provides asylum, albeit few rights, to those who reach its shores.

A World on the Brink: Years of ecological nonchalance have finally caught up with us, and our biosphere is on the edge irreversible collapse. Details you can drop into your campaign appear below.

Background

In 1953, Chemie Grünenthal synthesized thalidomide in West Germany. A sedative, thalidomide was available in some places until mid-1962. Unfortunately, not only did a percentage of users develop peripheral neuritis, but it also caused startling deformities in fetuses. Untold numbers died, and many continue to suffer from the effects.

If thalidomide could cross the placental wall and affect infants *in uteri*, perhaps other methods could influence the development of embryos positively. The reaction of the United States government to the tragedy was an increased interest in genetic research. Secretly, departments within the National Institute of Health (NIH) and the Department of Energy (DOE) began identifying the approximately 30,000 genes in human DNA, determining the sequence of the 3 billion chemical base pairs that make up human DNA, and developing tools to address the impact of ecological disasters on citizens. All over the world, wealthy nations created their own black budget genetic projects. By 1970, every major world power was involved in a highly secret "gene race."

The desperate need for the results of this research surfaced time and again, as the hazards of chemical landfills made themselves clear in places like the Love Canal neighborhood of Niagara Falls, New York; as the pesticide dioxin proved so harmful to the environment; and as the defoliant Agent Orange proved to cause cancer.

In 1997, embryologist Ian Wilmut and colleagues at the Roslin Institute in Scotland publicly announced the successful cloning of Dolly, a sheep. US President William Clinton issued a moratorium on the use of federal funds for human cloning research in the United States. The same government that hid the existence of the National Security Agency (NSA) in black budget line items, sterilized the mentally retarded and others it considered "undesirable," and denied treatment for syphilis to 399 African-American males, continued its research without public knowledge or scrutiny.

Mikael Noguchi

The primary focus of NIH research was genetically engineering healthier, smarter human beings (franks). The DOE focused on quicker methods of producing tools for the military and intelligence communities (moreaus). By 1985, both projects had stable prototypes brought to term by surrogate mothers. At small, secret bases around the nation, they began raising and training their creations. Similar events happened behind the scenes around the world. The genetically engineered characters found in GeneTech are the first generation of adults raised from the first stable genetic creations.

In the early years of the 21st Century, the world reeled when news media sources flashed images of Macedonian human-animal hybrids unleashed on ethnically Albanian rebels. Questions over how Macedonia could afford the products of such expensive research swiftly followed, and many feared the new genetic superpowers were using regional conflicts to test their creations. In the United States, a groundswell of public opinion rushed the passage of the honorable Mr. Weldon's legislation prohibiting genetic experimentation on human beings. The media quickly dubbed the hybrids "moreaus," from H.G. Wells' *The Island of Dr. Moreau*. When the Israelis revealed a generation of genetically engineered soldiers, the media coined the term "frank," derived from Frankenstein's monster.

The genie was out of the bottle.

Campaign Traits

The following themes and background concepts form the foundation of a GeneTech campaign. Understanding them means understanding the basic forces at play upon the lives of your characters and their enemies.

Genetic Engineering

Genetic engineering has varying legal status around the world. In GeneTech's United States, doctors must insure a person's health in embryo. The federal government and the insurance industry help support this medical practice. Choosing gender, eye color, and hair color is also legal, but the financial responsibility lies solely with the parents. More than that is against federal law enforced by a special branch of the National Institute of Health.

Moral and ethical issues surrounding genetic testing and engineering abound. The resolution of these issues will change the world. Since all of your heroes are moreaus or franks, they have a stake in the change. Even the products of normal, random genetics, so-called "pure strain humans," are affected. Genetic testing can reveal an inherited vulnerability to certain diseases or conditions. Insurance companies in GeneTech may legally refuse to insure people based on the possibility of later contracting a disease or condition, creating a caste of "uninsurables."

Ecological Disaster

In 1995, the Scripps Institution of Oceanography at the University of California (San Diego) published a report outlining the decline of zooplankton, a vital link in the food chain, off the coast of Southern California over the preceding 42 years. In GeneTech, the warming trend cited in the report, and the decline, continue. Algal "blooms" are visible in the world's oceans. Fish populations are declining, and some people question whether it is too late to reverse the process. Weather is unusually warm and violent around the globe. Sudden torren-

Peripheral Neuritis: A nerve disorder that can occur anywhere in the body. It may begin with a prickly or tingling feeling in the hands, feet, or both, and is followed by sensations of numbness and cold. That numbness spreads and is followed by severe muscular cramps, weakness of the limbs, and lack of coordination. Some of the symptoms may improve or disappear when the cause is removed, but the damage can in some cases remain irreversible. Peripheral neuritis is a form of nerve damage.

tial storms are common and weather-related disasters such as mudslides, hurricanes, tornadoes, and floods increase.

Boundless Greed

Corporations act out of their own self-interest and that of powerful individuals within them. In GeneTech, corporations incite riots to destroy property belonging to rivals or to potential purchases. They finance insurgent movements, "investing" in a government more likely to let them exploit local natural resources and the population, or just to get a more favorable tax structure. Corporations finance their own security and investigation forces, and certainly use franks and possibly even moreaus (out of the public eye, of course).

Increased Violent Crime

Hate crimes, particularly racially motivated violence, increased shortly after the revelation that genetically engineered creations coexisted with "pure-strain humans." New global terrorist groups, calling themselves "Uncorrupted," appeared, taking credit for assaults on sperm banks, medical clinics, genetic laboratories, and various government facilities. Most law enforcement agencies believe that old hate groups simply claim the title Uncorrupted and no global organization exists.

The sense of hopelessness in the face of impending ecological disaster provided a convenient excuse for people with violent tendencies to abandon any pretense of law-abiding lives. With the increase in racial violence, brutal crimes are far more common in GeneTech. Criminals have access to high-quality weapons. Being mugged by someone with an HK or a Glock is more common than being mugged by someone with a .22 zip gun.

The Law

Law enforcement officers routinely wear special response vests on patrol. Their helmets have integrated lights, video cameras, radios, and microphones. Most patrol officers have assault rifles in the trunks of their patrol cars and carry submachine guns if on foot, bike, or mounted patrols.

Popular belief is that all moreaus and franks are trained killers. This heightens tension in every encounter with law enforcement, since officers can never be sure whether they're stopping a frank, a covert moreau, or a human being. While franks and covert moreaus often "pass" as normal humans, other moreaus suffer prejudice and racism at the hands, boots, and clubs of many law enforcement officers.

While it is legal for non-felons in GeneTech to own firearms, there are a number of relevant laws that restrict ownership, transportation, concealed carry, and use. Owning a handgun requires a state handgun license and a three-day "cooling off" period prior to purchase. You may not legally carry a concealed firearm without a concealed carry permit. However, some states allow you to carry a handgun openly without more than a state handgun license. Check your state government's website for laws pertaining to the sale, possession, and concealed carry of firearms in your area—those laws still exist in GeneTech. Note that licenses issued in one state apply only to that state. Heroes intending to cross state lines and continue to carry their firearms legally should apply for licenses in the destination state in advance.

Brandishing a firearm in a threatening manner is assault, a felony. Use of a firearm is assault, manslaughter, or murder, depending on the circumstances. While it is possible to demonstrate self-defense or accident, public opinion in GeneTech's United States is strongly against the use of firearms (except when used by ordinary humans against overt "monsters"). Even military or law-enforcement characters face a hearing after using their firearms. It is a complicated legal situation.

In the United States, possession of a military firearm is legal—if you have a Federal Firearms Class 5 license, meaning you are registered with the United States government as a firearms collector. Such licenses are not issued to felons. A military ID card is not a license to carry any kind of firearm.

Enforcement of these laws is entirely up to the individual officer encountered. An officer may consider a shotgun in the trunk of a car as a concealed firearm, or as a safe place to transport it. One officer may have no particular prejudice against moreaus, while another may hate them. Similarly, the officials in charge of issuing licenses may delay or lose paperwork relating to moreaus.

Power Groups

Just as in the real world, overt and covert organizations manipulate political and cultural events to their own ends. The following groups play definitive roles in a GeneTech campaign. Take a moment to familiarize yourself with each organization and its goals, noting whether each makes a good ally or enemy for your characters and the circumstances in which the player characters might come into contact with it.

Corporations

The needs of multinational corporations drive many world events in GeneTech. They seek favorable tax structures, open markets, customers with money to spend, cheaper labor, and easier access to resources, among other things. They pursue these things ruthlessly; publicly espousing strong moral stances while privately doing whatever is necessary to ensure their business thrives. The only reason multinationals haven't developed their own genetic soldiers and spies is that development takes decades, with further decades required to raise and train the results. The multinationals seek faster returns on their investments. With the massive dislocation of populations caused by ethnic cleansing and the collapse of so many Central Asian and African governments, corporations have a large pool of talent from which to hire.

Criminals

As genetically engineered beings seek refuge, they form a pool of desperate, hungry, poverty-stricken people willing to do anything to improve their situations. Since most of them have backgrounds in espionage or unconventional warfare, organized crime turns their skills and experience to criminal activities whenever possible.

It's worth noting that in GeneTech, many traditional criminal enterprises such as prostitution, smuggling, drug running, drug manufacturing, gambling, and gunrunning now serve as ways to finance political agendas, military operations, terrorist efforts, and more.

Governments

Governments spent billions of dollars over 40 years developing the genetically engineered beings now in use around the world. Those without the resources to develop their own "acquired" them through moles, sleeper agents, and traitors motivated by greed, religion, morality, or reasons of their own.

Governments in GeneTech routinely engage in low-level warfare with each other. While they use all sorts of traditional special operations units to do so, the secret nature of the genetically engineered units means that governments can act far more directly while still denying any involvement in such bellicose actions.

Underground

When the GeneTech campaign begins, the moreaus and franks are not a political power group. The Underground, such as it is, smuggles moreaus and franks out of their native countries and into countries where they have more rights or better treatment, such as the United States. They're still not treated well in the US, but as sources of information, potential double agents, and refugees, they fare better here than elsewhere. The Underground is too small to be a political power and too disorganized to present a unified political front. Internal squabbles and a developing schism between the smugglers and the assassins of the Action Arm (see the Underground, p. 29 of this article) allow world governments to treat the Underground as a bunch of international criminals.

Allies and Opponents

The *Monster Manual* is a great source for unusual opponents in GeneTech. Some suggestions for more human allies and opponents follow. Whether your heroes treat these groups as allies or opponents depends on where you set your campaign and on what they do for a living.

Central Intelligence Agency

The United States CIA functions primarily as a scapegoat for other agencies in the intelligence branch of the government. They run few operations, primarily with franks, though they do borrow moreaus from other agencies when necessary. All operations are highly classified. The CIA regards foreign moreaus and franks within the United States as sources of information, and as potential double agents. When it considers them a threat to national security, it passes responsibility to the FBI. The CIA's charter prevents it from having any official interest in individuals who escape American development facilities. Only those agents with top secret clearance and "need to know" realize such facilities exist.

Department of Energy

The DOE worked in partnership with the National Institute of Health to develop franks and moreaus. Now it focuses on fine-tuning existing moreaus and developing new ones. Because of their expertise, they often send teams to investigate sightings of new moreau strains. Their Nuclear Emergency Strike Teams (NESTs) also make extensive use of moreaus. The DOE works with the FBI to pursue escaped test subjects, and is interested in refugees only if they have information pertaining to, or if they actually are, new strains of moreau. Every DOE employee knows of the Human Genome Project (HGP), but few know of the department's role in its application or of the US government's development facilities.

Federal Bureau of Investigation

Between assisting local law enforcement and those crimes it investigates directly (civil rights, domestic and international terrorism, foreign counterintelligence, organized crime/drugs, violent crimes and major offenders, and white-collar crime); the FBI works harder than ever before. The FBI makes no public use of moreaus or franks, claiming to operate entirely with humans. There is no evidence that Uncorrupted operators have infiltrated the Bureau, despite rumors to the contrary. The FBI regards all foreign refugees as potential security threats. A highly-classified FBI unit actively hunts individuals who escape American development facilities, using human agents and moreaus supplied by the DOE.

Federal Security Bureau

The FSB of the Federation of Russian States is the current incarnation of the KGB. Although Russia is not the power the Soviet Union was, the FSB works very hard to ensure Russian security. It enjoys a great deal of favor with the Russian government and actively seeks ways to gain both military and economic advantages for the *rodina*, the mother country. The FSB uses franks and moreaus equally and openly. The FSB regards foreign moreaus and franks within the Federation of Russian States as sources of information, potential double agents, and possible spies. While the Federation admits to using moreaus and franks, it never admits to escapes, and hunts escapees across borders with total ruthlessness.

Immigration and Naturalization Service

The United States INS has a classified enforcement arm in GeneTech that uses franks and moreaus to hunt others of their

kind who enter the United States illegally. In addition, the INS is involved in all FBI "debriefings" of suspected frank and moreau foreign agents. The INS has no responsibility for those individuals who escape American development facilities, and in fact has no knowledge of such facilities.

Interpol

Little more than an advisory group and information exchange, Interpol is overwhelmed by the cross-border crime occurring in GeneTech. Possessing no moreaus or franks of its own, Interpol would be at a distinct disadvantage if its mission included pursuing and arresting gene-altered felons. Moreaus and franks in the Underground treat Interpol as an opponent. Those working for a government agency or living law-abiding lives ignore it.

Ministry of Public Security (Science and Technology Bureau)

The Ministry is the equivalent of the FBI and the CIA in the People's Republic of China. The Science and Technology Bureau makes avid use of the products of Chinese genetic research, and actively works to acquire genetic secrets from foreign powers. The Ministry uses franks and moreaus openly. It regards foreign moreaus and franks within the PRC as sources of information, potential double agents, and possible spies. While the PRC admits to using moreaus and franks, it never admits to escapes, and hunts escapees even into other nations, with total ruthlessness.

Mossad

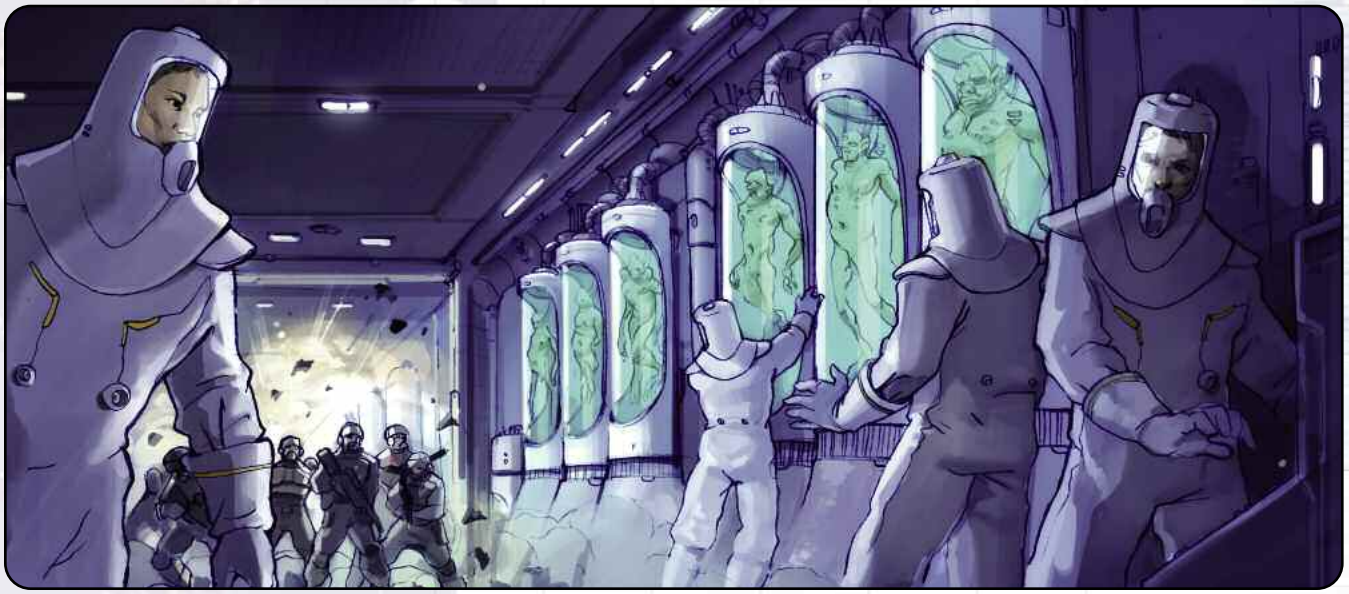
The Institute for Intelligence and Special Tasks, *ha-Mossad le-Modiin ule-Tafkidim Meyuhadim* or Mossad, is Israel's agency for human intelligence collection, covert action, and counter terrorism. Though it focuses on Arab nations, Mossad agents go where their nation needs them. Israel has always been a tiny nation surrounded by enemies, and makes maximum use of every tool available. Franks and moreaus willing to work for the Mossad face an excruciating background check, but if accepted get both important assignments and large rewards. Despite the Israeli military's open use of franks, the Mossad uses moreaus and franks secretly, to prevent even more animosity from fundamentalist Islamic groups. The Mossad takes a keen interest in foreign refugees, treating them as double agents and sources of information at best, and as spies at worst. Because Israel is such a tiny nation, and because its enemies publicly offer enticements to defectors, no escapees from Israeli development facilities remain long in Israel. Those who do escape can expect the tireless agents of the Mossad to track them wherever they go.

Multinational Corporations

Multinational corporations are eager to use the fruits of genetic research, particularly since they didn't have to pay for the development. Multinationals engage in many criminal activities ideally suited for franks and moreaus, including theft and corporate espionage. Treatment of moreaus and franks varies with the corporation, and with the appearance of the individual. Overt moreaus generally receive worse treatment than covert moreaus. Whether or not a corporation pursues defectors depends on the defectors' access to corporate secrets. The greater the access or potential access, the harder the corporation pursues. There are no refugees within corporations, only employees.

National Institute of Health

The United States NIH partnered with the DOE to develop franks and moreaus. Unlike the DOE, the NIH concentrated on franks. Of primary concern to the NIH is the potential for such genetic research to be used for biological warfare. A detailed knowledge of the human genome allows for the creation of biological agents and it is possible that the retro-



Mikael Noguchi

sposons and retroviruses used in DNA grafting could escape, survive, and mutate into something very dangerous. In addition, the NIH works with the FBI to enforce the federal restrictions on genetic manipulation of fetuses. A surprising number of people travel outside the United States while pregnant, eventually spending time in countries with much more relaxed legislation. Such people find themselves the subject of uncomfortably close scrutiny on return. The NIH provides genetic and general health exams for moreau and frank refugees. The NIH has no responsibility for escaped individuals, and not everyone within the Institute knows of the United States' development facilities.

National Security Agency

The NSA, referred to by some as "No Such Agency" since its very existence was a carefully kept secret until the Carter administration, is the ears of the United States. The NSA eavesdrops, cracks codes, enforces United States laws on distribution of cryptographic information, and is becoming more closely involved in Information Warfare (IW). In a GeneTech campaign, the NSA utilizes franks and covert moreaus in a host of top-secret operations. The agency tends to use the CIA as the "fall guy" whenever these operations fail, always attempting to cover its tracks with a near-pathological fervor. It tracks its own refugees with help from the FBI, but assumes no responsibility for those who escape United States development facilities.

Uncorrupted

This generic term refers to any number of "humans first" racist organizations. They engage in terrorist activities and violent crimes. They associate with more traditional racist groups, like the Aryan Brotherhood and Purified Nation, and with many right-wing religious groups. Some groups operate only within their own national borders, while others are part of larger conspiracies. The Uncorrupted are enemies of all moreaus and franks, whether the mutants are agents of the government, political refugees, or escapees from government development facilities. They most commonly target the latter two, since mutants on the run or in hiding tend to have less support and fewer reinforcements.

Underground

Even law enforcement agencies have only heard rumors of this organization. More than likely they will soon know a great deal more. The Underground has two factions. The first helps franks and moreaus escape their government masters and find someplace to live in relative freedom. Some pursue the rewards of service to other governments. Some seek asylum in the United States. Others seek remote locations to hide from the world.

The other faction, known to insiders as the Action Arm, strikes back against the Uncorrupted, whom they view as the most serious current threat to genetically altered humans. The Action Arm reasons that racism is no excuse for murder and terrorism, and that no amount of violence can erase scientific knowledge. The Action Arm of the Underground is staffed almost entirely by franks and moreaus trained as spies and commandoes by one government or another. As the Action Arm increases its operations, many governments regard it, and the Underground by association, as a terrorist group.

Terrorists

Favorite villains for many techno thrillers, terrorist organizations exist all over the world. Some are regional, like the Basque separatists in southern France and northern Spain. Others, like al Qaeda, the PLO, and the IRA cross national borders. Motivated by ideology, politics, ethnicity, religion, or almost anything else, terrorists possess varying degrees of training and resources; many have benefited from CIA, FSB, or Chinese training, used as pawns in the Cold War and then left, forgotten, to tend to their shattered countries. Terrorists tend to avoid using franks or moreaus, since such individuals have at least some indoctrination from their parent government and could be spies or informers. While some terrorists have the resources to perform thorough background checks, many do not, and prefer not to risk moreaus or franks. Unlike the Uncorrputed, not all terrorist groups discriminate against franks or moreaus on ideological or religious grounds.

Department-7 in GeneTech

You can place Department-7 (see the *d20 Modern role-playing game*, p. 6) in any government agency, but there are four particularly good fits. As part of the DOE, working with NESTs and the FBI, Department-7 investigates moreaus and terrorist threats. Department-7 could be the classified enforcement arm of the INS (see below). In your campaign, Department-7 could be the highly-classified FBI unit actively hunting those who escape American development facilities. Finally, Department-7 could be the special branch of the NIH enforcing laws limiting genetic tinkering. No matter where you choose to place Department-7, its officials are aware of the American development facilities, but generally do not inform their agents.

Alternatively, all the heroes work for Department-7. Their missions include espionage, counter-terrorism, and other unconventional warfare tasks. The United States government has several such units, but publicly denies their existence

Chapter 2: Characters

While all sorts of regular folks inhabit the world of GeneTech, moreaus and franks stand at the center of the setting's most interesting political and paramilitary conflicts. Consequently, all GeneTech heroes must be either moreaus or franks.

Moreaus in GeneTech

Moreaus are animal-human hybrids created by grafting specific sequences of animal DNA to human DNA. It took 40 years of concentrated research to create these few, successful hybrids. All moreaus of the same nationality are descended from the same genetic material. They are all brothers and sisters.

To date, all successful hybrids have been of mammalian stock. Reports of strange creatures glimpsed in wilderness areas, or of bizarre corpses washing ashore, may be the results of unsuccessful attempts to create reptilian, amphibious, or piscine hybrids.

All government laboratories sterilize their moreaus, but stories among members of the Underground suggest that some sterilizations were botched and a limited number of moreaus are now reproducing on their own. Only time will tell if moreau children retain the unique attributes of their enhanced parents.

Moreaus are covered in some detail starting on p. 247 of the *d20 Modern roleplaying game*. The main d20 Modern rulebook offers rules for bat, bear, canine, dolphin, feline, and rat moreaus. GeneTech includes additional rules for orca moreaus, powerful beings created by splicing human genes with the genetic material of killer whales. Future articles in Polyhedron will present additional moreau subtypes.

Being A Moreau: Choose to play a moreau when creating a character and apply the appropriate modifiers to ability scores. As moreaus are born, not created from adults, there is no way to become a moreau during play.

New Moreau Species: Orca

Orca moreaus are a blend of human and killer whale. They tend to be large, bulky people with aggressive personalities and contempt for other species. Because of their almost uncontrollable physical power, aggression, and disdain for their creators, most nations consider this line a failure and instead work with the dolphin strain. However, a number exist and were pressed into various brutal services by their governments.

Overt orca moreaus have distinctive skin patterns, with a dark blue or black back, a white front, and white patterns around their shoulders and on their faces. They have pronounced webbing between their fingers. Overt orcas have tiny external ears. Unlike other overt moreaus, overt orcas tend to be hairless.

Variable Size: Covert and moderate orca moreaus are Medium-size. Coverts and moderates have a 5-foot-by-5-foot fighting space and a 5-foot reach.

Overt orca moreaus are Large. An overt orca moreau has a 10-foot-by-10-foot fighting space and a 10-foot reach.

Hold Breath (Ex): An orca moreau can remain submerged for a number of minutes equal to its Constitution score before needing to surface for air.

Blindsight (Ex): Overt orca moreaus have blindsight with a range of 60 feet on land or water.

Ability Scores: Orca moreaus have the following species modifiers to ability scores:

Covert: +2 Str, -2 Dex.

Moderate: +2 Str, -2 Dex, +2 Int, -2 Cha.

Overt: +4 Str, -4 Dex, +2 Int, -2 Cha.

Character Details: Use the bear moreau entries for height and weight on Table 8-24: Moreau Height and Weight in the *d20 Modern roleplaying game* to determine height and weight for orca moreaus. Use the dolphin entry on Table 8-25: Moreau Age to determine orca moreau ages.

Ilya Petrosky, Covert Orca Moreau Tough Hero 4/Soldier 1: CR 5; Medium-size humanoid; HD 5d10+14; hp 46; Mas 14; Init -1; Spd 30 ft; Defense 14, touch 13, flat-footed 14 (-1 Dex, +1 undercover shirt, +4 class); BAB +3; Grap +6; Atk +7 melee (1d6+4 lethal, brass knuckles); Full Atk +7 melee (1d6+4 lethal, brass knuckles), or +7 ranged (2d10, Browning BPS); FS 5 ft. by 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Hold breath, blindsight, low-light vision; AL *organizatsiya*; SV Fort +5, Ref +1, Will +2; AP 4; Rep +1; Str 17, Dex 8, Con 14, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Occupation: Criminal (bonus class skills: Knowledge (streetwise) and Gambling, bonus feat: Brawl).

Skills: Drive +1, Intimidate +6, Knowledge

Mikael Noguchi

(streetwise) +10, Knowledge (tactics) +3, Listen +3, Read/Write (English), Speak (English), Spot +3.

Feats: Advanced Firearms Proficiency, Brawl, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Simple Weapons Proficiency, Streetfighting.

Talents (Tough Hero): Robust, Second Wind.

Possessions: Browning BPS (10-gauge shotgun), 20 rounds of 10-gauge ammunition, 3 Molotov cocktails, brass knuckles, business clothing, overcoat, portable satellite phone.

Franks

Franks, genetically altered humans with enhanced capabilities derived from scientific experiments (rather than overt animalistic genetic influence), can be found in the black ops organizations of governments around the world. Franks come in an almost limitless variety, and generally do not suffer the same prejudices (or difficulties with animals) experienced by moreaus.

Being A Frank: Choose to play a frank when creating a character and apply the appropriate modifiers to ability scores. There is no way to become a frank during play.

Types of Frank

Though a theoretically infinite number of frank varieties exist, the following list includes many of the most common types:

Eggs: Short for "eggheads," these franks are primarily used as researchers. They have a +2 racial bonus to Intelligence, and -2 Constitution. They generally have no other modifications.

Enforcers: Enforcer franks have a +2 racial bonus to Strength, -2 Intelligence, and -2 Charisma. They generally have lowlight vision. Creatures with lowlight vision can see twice as far as a human in starlight, moonlight, torchlight, and similar conditions of poor illumination. They retain the ability to distinguish color and detail under these conditions. Enforcer franks are very popular with organized crime and other groups with a need for leg breakers.

Honeytraps: Honeytrap is a Cold War slang term for using prostitutes to blackmail people with access to sensitive information. Most honeytrap franks work as spies. They have a +2 racial bonus to Charisma, and -2 Wisdom.

Hunters: Hunter franks have a +2 racial bonus to Wisdom and -2 Charisma. They usually have lowlight vision. Creatures with lowlight vision can see twice as far as a human in starlight, moonlight, torchlight, and similar conditions of poor illumination. They retain the ability to distinguish color and detail under these conditions.

Praetorian: Named for the bodyguards of ancient Roman emperors, they have a +4 racial bonus to Constitution, -2 Intelligence, and -2 Charisma. They generally have no other modifications.

Sniper: Sniper franks have a +2 racial bonus to Dexterity, -2 Intelligence, and -2 Charisma. They generally have lowlight vision. Creatures with lowlight vision can see twice as far as a human in starlight, moonlight, torchlight, and similar conditions of poor illumination. They retain the ability to distinguish color and detail under these conditions. Sniper franks find great success in many criminal endeavors.

Frank Description

Franks use the same tables as humans to generate age, height, and weight.

Classes from Urban Arcana

Generally speaking, prestige classes in *d20 Modern* are campaign-specific. However, if you want to add some variety to your game, there are a number of classes from the Urban Arcana campaign setting with at least limited usefulness in GeneTech. Fixer, Street Warrior, and Swashbuckler are advanced classes that can be used with no changes. Celebrity,

Mastermind, Sniper, and Special Forces Operative are prestige classes that can be used with no changes. The trick is in limiting the other advanced classes before any supernatural abilities kick in (unless your campaign combines GeneTech with the supernatural).

Urban Arcana

Advanced Class	Maximum Level
Bounty Hunter	4
Confidence Artist	6
Hacker	7
Thrasher	6

GUERILLA INTRUDER

We have always feared the darkness. Thanks to a combination of government training and genetic experiments, we have another reason. Now assassins and ninjas are joined by Guerilla Intruders. Their genetic gifts let them operate in total darkness without special equipment. They are the bump in the night that makes our blood run cold. For them, night is an ally and a comforting friend.

Select this prestige class if you want your character to excel at stealth and to use hand to hand combat as a killing tool.

The fastest path to this prestige class is through a combination of the Fast basic class and the Infiltrator advanced class, though other paths are possible. Progress in the Guerilla Intruder class can run concurrently with other classes.

Requirements

To qualify to become a Guerilla Intruder, a character must fulfill all of the following criteria.

Skills: Hide 9 ranks, Move Silently 9 ranks, Disable Device 4 ranks.

Feats: Evasion, Stealthy.

Special: The character must naturally possess the blindsight ability, as bat and overt dolphin moreaus do.

Class Information

The following information pertains to the Guerilla Intruder prestige class.

Hit Die

The Guerilla Intruder gains 1d6 hit points per level. The character's Constitution modifier applies.

Action Points

The Guerilla Intruder gains a number of action points equal to 5 plus one-half his character level, rounded down, every time he attains a new level in this class.

Class Skills

The Guerilla Intruder's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are as follows.

Balance (Dex), Climb (Str), Demolitions (Int), Disable Device (Int), Hide (Dex), Investigate (Int), Jump (Str), Knowledge (Tactics) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Navigate (Int), Search (Int), Spot (Wis), Survival (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Intelligence modifier. Do not subtract 1 from this amount as you would for classes, as this amount already assumes your character is nonhuman.

Class Features

The following features pertain to the Guerilla Intruder prestige class.

Combat Martial Arts: At 1st level, the Guerilla Intruder gains Combat Martial Arts as a bonus feat. The Guerilla Intruder gains no additional ability if she already has this feat.

Sneak Attack: If a Guerilla Intruder can catch an opponent when he is unable to defend himself effectively from her attack, she can strike a vital spot with an unarmed attack for extra damage. Any time a Guerilla Intruder's target would be denied his Dexterity bonus to AC (whether he actually has a Dexterity bonus or not), or when the Guerilla Intruder flanks the target, the Guerilla Intruder's unarmed melee attack deals extra damage. The extra damage is +1d6 at 2nd level and an additional 1d6 every two levels thereafter. Should the Guerilla Intruder score a critical hit with a sneak attack, this extra damage is not multiplied.

Like the Wind: Beginning at 3rd level, the Guerilla Intruder suffers no penalties to Move Silently checks for moving at more than half speed. In addition the Guerilla Intruder can make Move Silently checks while running or charging, but at a -10 penalty to the check.

No Trace: At 5th level, the Guerilla Intruder knows how to hide his own tracks and may, at his choice, move into "No Trace" mode. All attempts to use the Track feat against the Guerilla Intruder (though not allies) treat the ground as "firm" for purposes of success. In addition, the DCs of any attempts to use Computer Use, Gather Information, Investigate, and

Table 2-1: The Guerilla Intruder

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Defense Special	Reputation Bonus	Bonus
1	+0	+0	+2	+0	Combat Martial Arts	+1	+0
2	+1	+0	+3	+0	Sneak Attack +1d6	+2	+0
3	+1	+1	+3	+1	Like the Wind	+2	+0
4	+2	+1	+4	+1	Sneak Attack +2d6	+3	+0
5	+2	+1	+4	+1	No Trace	+4	+1

Table 2-2: The Patrol Pointer

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Defense Bonus	Reputation Bonus
1	+1	+1	+2	+0	Trap Sense (+1)	+1	+0
2	+2	+2	+3	+0	Close Combat Shot	+1	+0
3	+3	+2	+3	+1	Enhanced Scent	+2	+0
4	+4	+2	+4	+1	Trap Sense (+2)	+2	+0
5	+5	+3	+4	+1	Specialization Threat.	+3	+1

Research on matters involving the Guerilla Intruder are increased by the levels of the Guerilla Intruder.

Patrol Pointer

The lead person on a military patrol must have finely honed senses in order to detect booby traps, landmines, and ambushes. Thanks to genetic experimentation, moreaus often fill that dangerous role. With their highly-tuned senses, moreaus are even more adept at discovering trouble in time for the rest of their team to respond with aggression and finality.

Select this prestige class if you want your character to take the lead and use his senses to find trouble before his friends stumble into it.

The fastest path to this prestige class is through a combination of Strong and Fast basic classes and the Soldier advanced class, though other paths are possible. Progress in the Patrol Pointer class can run concurrently with other classes.

Requirements

To qualify to become a Patrol Pointer, a character must fulfill all of the following criteria.

Base Attack Bonus: +5.

Skills: Hide 4 ranks, Move Silently 4 ranks.

Feats: Advanced Firearms Proficiency, Alertness, Endurance, Guide, Light Armor Proficiency, Medium Armor Proficiency, Personal Firearms Proficiency, Track.

Special: The character must naturally possess the scent ability, as canine moreaus do.

The character must have Weapon Focus and Weapon Specialization with an assault rifle such as the AKM/AK47, HK G3, M16A2, M4 carbine, or Steyr AUG.

Class Information

The following information pertains to the Patrol Pointer prestige class.

Hit Die

Patrol Pointers gain 1d8 hit points per level. The character's Constitution modifier applies.

Action Points

Patrol Pointers gain a number of action points equal to 5 plus one-half their character level, rounded down, every time they advance a level in this class.

Class Skills

The Patrol Pointer's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are as follows:

Climb (Str), Demolitions (Int), Disable Device (Int), Hide (Dex), Jump (Str), Knowledge (Tactics) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Navigate (Int), Search (Int), Spot (Wis), Survival (Wis), Treat Injury (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Intelligence modifier. Do not subtract 1 from this amount as you would for classes, as this amount already assumes your character is nonhuman.

Class Features

The following features pertain to the Patrol Pointer prestige class.

Trap Sense: Starting at 1st level, the Patrol Pointer gains an intuitive sense that alerts him to danger from traps, giving him a +1 bonus to Reflex saves made to avoid traps and a +1 dodge bonus to AC against attacks by traps. At 4th level this bonus increases to +2. These bonuses stack with trap sense bonuses gained from other classes.

Close Combat Shot: At 2nd level, the Patrol Pointer gains the ability to make a ranged attack with a Large or smaller firearm while in a threatened area without provoking an attack of opportunity.

Enhanced Scent: At 3rd level, the Patrol Pointer becomes more attuned to his sense of smell. He can detect opponents within 40 feet by sense of smell. If the opponent is upwind, the range increases to 80 feet; if downwind, it drops to 20 feet. Strong scents, such as smoke or rotting garbage, can be detected at twice these ranges. Overpowering scents, such as troglodyte stench, can be detected at triple normal range. The Patrol Pointer must still be within 5 feet of an opponent to pinpoint that opponent's location. The Patrol Pointer also gains a +2 competence bonus to follow tracks by smell.

Specialization Threaten: At 5th level, the Patrol Pointer may threaten nearby areas with a chosen firearm in the same fashion as he would with a melee weapon. The firearm effectively functions as a reach weapon that may affect anything up to 30 feet away. Any attacks of opportunity received by threatening these areas are treated as ranged attacks, and count against the maximum number of attacks of opportunity that round.

The Patrol Pointer may use this ability only with firearms with which he has Weapons Specialization.

Chapter 3: Adventures

GeneTech adventures explode from the headlines. They include features such as terrorism, black-market weapons, environmental exploitation, Third World insurrection, corporate espionage, religious fanaticism, hate crimes, drug trafficking, slavery and the smuggling of refugees, and the illegal use of genetic technology. See Campaign Setup and Stand-Alone Adventure Setups, below, for some examples.

Writing and running techno thriller adventures requires special attention to some key areas. Reward actions that fit the genre. If characters use resourcefulness, tenacity, and wit, reward them with additional clues, bending the rules, or altering the adventure in small ways.

Outlines & Structure

Thrillers use complex plots. Make a simple chart showing the connections between the events, people, and bits of information that characters may encounter. It should have at least one route from the beginning of the adventure to the end, and preferably two or more. Players should never know there was more than one way to succeed.

Build a timetable for the villains' plot. Know the villains' resources. Make sure who knows what among your NPCs. If you need an NPC to have a piece of information to keep the pace of the adventure quick, a good outline will tell you which NPC has that information and how. Outline the events the heroes get from news reports and other sources, and where those clues lead. Include the clues they get from investigating. There should be a difference between what the villain does and what the heroes perceive, at least at first.

Complicate things. An NPC who hires the heroes to foil an assassination plot may be a criminal hiring them to interfere with a government investigation, or with another criminal's takeover attempt. Even when the plot is straightforward, weather, equipment breakdowns, unexpected interest from third parties, detours, and so forth complicate simple adventures.

Pacing

A techno thriller is first and foremost a thriller. It must be fast paced. The consequences of failure should have an immediate impact on the heroes, though they don't have to save the world every adventure.

NPCs

Use NPCs to reinforce the tone of the genre. Give them interesting traits and appropriate settings. There's a sense that common people have given up on changing things. Even well-meaning government officials, from law-enforcement to mayors and governors, may be unable to influence circumstances for the better. People with the enhanced characteristics shared by the heroes, however, can make concrete changes for the better.

Don't spend a lot of time detailing an NPC that heroes encounter once. If heroes encounter an NPC a second time, emphasize traits you already described and add another detail or two. Reveal the NPC over a period of time. Every now and then, throw the heroes a curve. Have an NPC they need be a real jerk. Have a villain act politely and be kind to children and small animals.

The next time you're in a crowd, take notes on the one or two people who immediately attract your attention. There are a few in every crowd, and describing people like them to your players provides memorable detail. Crowds themselves can be characters. Many adventures occur in crowded, urban settings. Crowds react to things, often in dangerous ways. Mobs and riots having nothing to do with the adventure may complicate things.

Pets act in unpredictable ways that can make them a danger to themselves, the heroes, or innocent bystanders. A berserk seeing eye dog can complicate a scene. Conversely, meeting an NPC draped in a pet boa constrictor sets a different tone than meeting one in a white suit feeding a parrot. In GeneTech, animals generally react poorly to moreaus, even coverts, but not to franks. If you know an animal's behavior well, put one in your adventure and have it react as if threatened when a moreau is near. Use that to warn the heroes, or the NPCs, and to reinforce the setting.

Idiots generally don't pass the qualification tests to become law enforcement officers, even if you don't like the last one that gave you a traffic ticket. Make law enforcement a real threat to the heroes. A detective or FBI

Tom Fowler

agent who believes the heroes guilty of crimes but has no proof makes a good recurring character until his lack of proof becomes a joke.

Create opponents to challenge your particular heroes. Create one or two recurring opponents who always manage to escape. If not from the heroes, then from incarceration later.

Technology

Every scene should emphasize that technology is a powerful tool. Place clues in computers that a hero must hack. Stage an encounter in a dark forest or underground complex in which night-vision gear gives heroes the edge.

Stick to what you know. If that gets repetitive, research fields unknown to your players. Don't let technical details bog down pacing, but make sure the details you do use are correct. Take notes when watching movies or television. The film *Along Came a Spider* mentions an encoding program that hides text messages in the binary code of GIF images. You might use that, hiding complex information on a CD of innocent-seeming music or software, or even on videotape.

GeneTech Robots

Robots are quite common in GeneTech, where they are primarily used for hazardous materials handling and reconnaissance. The following two specific robots are perhaps most common.

"Beetle" Reconnaissance Robot: Use the diminutive robot described in Chapter Eight: Friends and Foes of the *d20 Modern roleplaying game* for basic statistics. The beetle uses the quadruped frame (Speed 30 feet), though in fact it has six legs. It has no attacks. It does have audio-visual sensors and a 300-foot remote control link. The beetle is programmed with the Climb skill (5 ranks, and it uses its Dexterity bonus to climb, for a total skill bonus of +7).

Seagull Unmanned Aerial Vehicle: Use the tiny robot described in Chapter Eight: Friends and Foes of the *d20 Modern roleplaying game* for basic statistics. The UAV uses the bipedal frame with a few changes (Speed 20 feet, Fly 40 feet (good)). It has no attacks. It does have audio-visual sensors and a 300-foot remote control link. The UAV is programmed with the Move Silently skill (5 ranks, and it receives a mastercraft bonus, for a total skill bonus of +10).

See the Techie in Chapter Six: Advanced Classes of the *d20 Modern roleplaying game* for more information on robots.

Mean Streets: Sample Campaign Setup

While the types of GeneTech campaigns you can run are as unlimited as the political and racial conflicts present in the modern world, the following sample campaign, which starts in a repressive government training facility and ends in a manhunt on the streets and rooftops of a major city, highlights many of the most important and compelling themes likely to come up in the world of GeneTech and serves as the beginnings of a much longer campaign.

The campaign requires a wilderness area and an urban area. As the GM, pick an urban area you know well. If you don't spend much time in the city, choose an urban area your players don't know and pick up a travel book about the city in a used book store, or look up street maps and other information on the Web. Pick a wilderness area at least as close to your urban area as to any other. The heroes begin as 1st-level franks and moreaus in training at a secret INS facility in the wilderness who escape and make new lives in the city.

CONSIDER THIS

Before you begin the campaign, you must decide how the INS tracks its moreaus and franks. If it uses tattooed bar codes, it will be much harder for the INS to track the heroes after they escape the secret facility in which the campaign begins. If it uses embedded microchips, the heroes may not know the chips exist. Such chips can be read by anyone with the proper equipment, provided they are close enough (within 5 feet) of the chip. A new, secret technology that allows the microchips to transmit a radio frequency response to a query signal makes tracking the heroes for the final confrontation easier if that transmission reaches up to a mile.

CAMPAIGN STAGE 1: BREAKOUT

At the beginning of the first campaign stage, the PCs are prisoners in a top-secret military training center specializing in educating frank and moreau agents in the rudiments of tracking their own kind. It ends with the heroes on the run from their former captors.

THE TRIGGER

Read or paraphrase this opening scene to the players to get the action going:

You are trainees at a government camp. You don't know where in the United States you are, but the camp is surrounded by wilderness. You live in 5-foot-by-10-foot rooms. Forty of you live at the facility. You've been in camps like this all your life, and now you're adults. You've never seen a television broadcast or read a newspaper. You've heard the soldiers' radios in brief snatches before they, or you, got caught. You know they're training you to be soldiers, special soldiers, working in teams with other moreaus and franks. In fact, this facility is experimenting with different combinations of moreaus and franks to see what combinations make the most effective teams. The people here are cruel to you and your friends. Before, when you were children, you felt helpless. Recently you realized that in many ways you are better than those guarding you, and you're fed up with the petty cruelty and racism. When you found out you were training to hunt others like you, you decided to seize your freedom. Using codes you developed as children, you are planning escape. Take some time to talk about how and when you want to do it. Ask me questions about your situation, then make a break for it.

THE SETTING

The facility itself is 1,000 feet across and surrounded by a 10-foot high, electrified (2d6 points of electricity damage each round in contact with the fence) chain-link fence, with strands of barbed wire at the top. The fence has to keep people in and out, so there are two sets of barbed wire strands, one slanted in and one slanted out. Climbing the fence is simple (DC 5), but crossing the barbed wire requires a Reflex save (DC 10) to avoid taking 1d4 points of damage and becoming stuck in the fence (a hero can tear loose by taking an additional 1d4 points of damage or by making a DC 10 Escape Artist check). Guard towers are positioned at each corner of the compound and on each side of the gates.

Wilderness training areas surround the central compound. The perimeter fence is five miles in any direction from the chain-link fence surrounding the central compound. The outer fence is identical to the inner one. A dirt road runs around the outside of the outer fence. The dirt road runs to and from the main entrance to the wilderness area, a simple wooden bar across the road with an information hut, a guard barracks, and a motor pool. To the uninformed, it looks like private logging land.

SECURITY

Two soldiers are in each guard tower, one manning a searchlight and the other manning an M-60 machinegun. Two soldiers man the front desk in the lobby of the main building. Four soldiers work the ground floor security center, and four soldiers work the underground security center. They work three shifts per day. Another 122 soldiers patrol the compound, work in the armory or motor pool, or guard the trainees (franks and moreaus) during classroom or field training.

In addition, 4-soldier teams in AM General Hummers patrol the outer fence. A patrol passes any point along the fence once an hour. Use them to increase the drama and danger of the escape, or to provide a vehicle they can hijack. The patrols' barracks and motor pool are at the main entrance to the wilderness area.

If an alert sounds, all shifts report for duty. Patrols pass any point along the outer fence every fifteen minutes. Four-soldier foot patrols walk outside the inner fence, each patrol just in sight of the one in front of it. Expect three times as many guards at the security posts and centers, but no more than two in any of the towers.

ADMINISTRATION

Twenty scientists and five technicians work in the facility, running medical tests and planning the development of new strains of frank and moreau. Ten administrators provide leadership. In alerts, administrators report to the security centers and take command. The scientists and technicians remain in their quarters.

PERSONNEL

Use low-level Strong/Tough ordinaries for soldiers, but substitute Advanced Firearms Proficiency for Brawl. They wear light-duty vests during their active shifts and carry stun guns, tear gas grenades, zip-tie handcuffs, FN Five-SeveN pistols, and FN P90 submachineguns (see below for descriptions and statis-

tics). They have one spare magazine for their pistols and four spare magazines for their submachine guns. Patrols outside the compound wear fatigues, fatigue jackets (if appropriate for the location and time of year), and mesh vests. Those patrols carry night-vision goggles (night patrols only) professional walkie-talkies, electro-optical binoculars, chemical light sticks, GPS receivers, tactical maps, and search-and-rescue kits.

Use low-level Smart/Charismatic ordinaries for the administrators. They carry FN Five-SeveN pistols and wear light undercover shirts. Use low-level Smart/Dedicated ordinaries for the scientists and technicians. They do not wear armor and do not carry weapons.

Adventure Goals

The goal is to escape the central compound, cover the 5 miles of surrounding rough, wilderness terrain, get over that fence, and hitch a ride to the city. Once in the city, heroes can disappear into the population (if they are franks or covert moreaus) or hide in abandoned buildings or sewers (if they are moderate or overt moreaus). Let your players figure out their own escape plan, but here are two suggestions to nudge your players along, or to prepare you for their schemes.

Fire

Heroes can start a fire using the lights in their cells and their mattresses or clothes. If a fire starts in the main building, the soldiers evacuate the trainees to the parade ground in front of the main building. Patrols don't increase around either fence, so if the heroes can make it over the fence without being spotted, they have an hour before anyone can bring order to the chaos and take a headcount.

Security Force Weapons: The soldiers carry weapons made by Fabrique National (FN), a Belgian company. Both use the same ammunition, a 5.7mm x 28mm round specially developed for both weapons. This simplifies the logistics required by the compound. The Five-SeveN pistol is a semi-automatic pistol with a box magazine in the grip and a polymer frame. The P90 submachine gun is a unique looking weapon, with a transparent polymer magazine that sits directly above the barrel of the weapon. The cartridges are aligned 90-degrees from the barrel axis, and each magazine has a built-in ramp that rotates the cartridge to align it with the barrel prior to chambering it.

Field Training

During field training, trainees have the proper clothing for the current weather, compasses, mesh vests, tactical maps (these only show the interior of the training area, but can be used to navigate to the outer fence), chemical light sticks, and professional walkie-talkies. Field training takes place both day and night. It's relatively easy for two or three heroes to ambush one of the two-soldier teams watching the training, creating an opportunity to acquire weapons and make a break for it. The drawback is that their absence is obvious in about five minutes.

Experience Points

Between the escape plan, critical skill checks during the escape, encounters with patrols, encounters in the wilderness, and skill checks to survive and navigate, heroes should earn enough experience points to reach 2nd level.

Campaign Stage 2: Welcome Wagon

When heroes arrive in the city, they face several immediate problems. They have no money, they have no place to live, and they have no jobs. If they're willing to turn to crime, they'll have no problem finding money but they will have trouble with the police. They can squat in any abandoned building, if they're willing to put up with rats, roaches, drug addicts, other squatters, no electricity, and no running water. There are many such places in the moreau slums of the city. Depending on who they befriend or offend, and depending on their appearance, they may be able to find work—honest or otherwise.

Some heroes may decide to sell their story of being raised in secret, US government facilities to the media for the money they need to start over. If they do so, you may want to run the third installment of the campaign (Outbreak, see below) as you run this adventure. The only media source willing to buy their story should be the sort that runs stories about bat boys and Elvis sightings. If the heroes ask about their story, tell them it

Jeff Carlisle

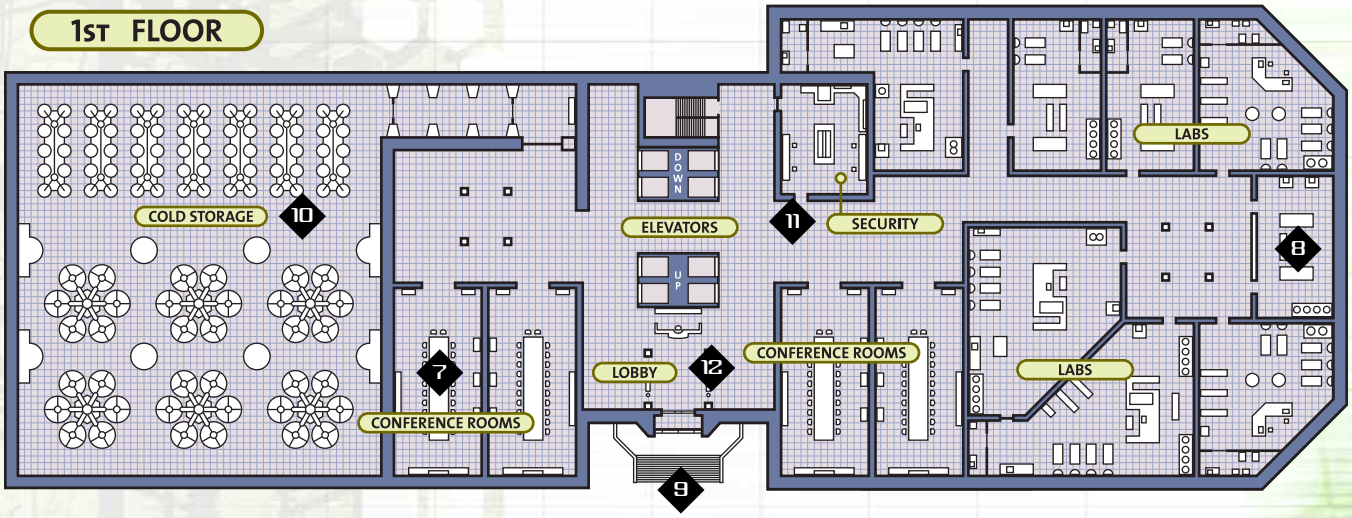
Name	Damage	Crit.	Damage Type	Range Increment	Rate of Fire	Purchase Magazine	Size	Weight	DC	Restriction
Five-SeveN[1]	2d8	20	Ballistic	40 ft.	S	20 box	Small	1.5 lb.	20	Res (+2)
P90[1]	2d8	20	Ballistic	70 ft.	S, A	50 box	Large	8 lb.	21	Res (+2)

1. This mastercraft weapon grants a +1 bonus on attack rolls.

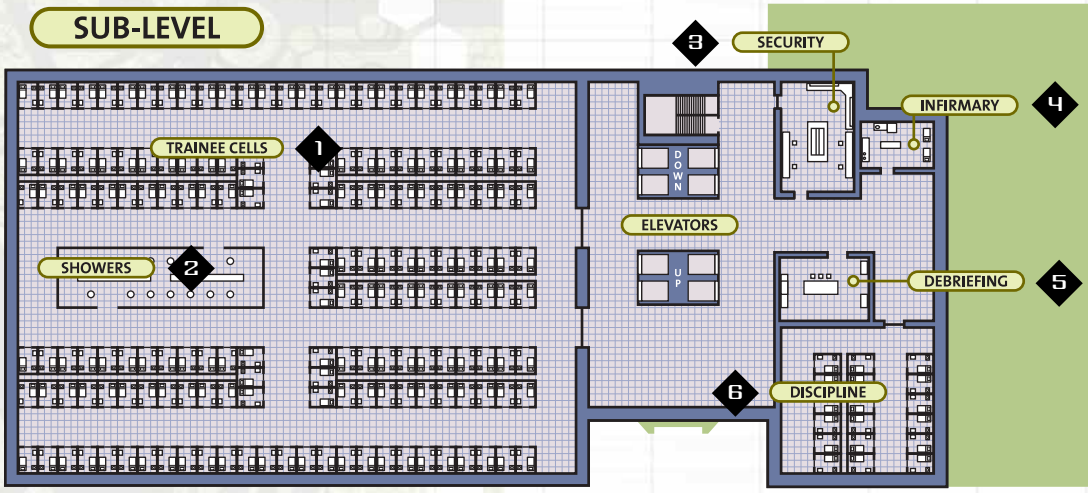
gene tech

2ND FLOOR

1ST FLOOR



SUB-LEVEL



Chris Trevas

still hasn't appeared in whatever media (television, newspaper, etc.) bought it. If they investigate further, tell them the person who interviewed them died. The circumstances of the death should be questionable, but not obviously murder. Meanwhile, no one in the media will talk to them anymore because the INS has terrified them into silence. All they have really accomplished with their limited resources is to let the INS know in which city they are hiding.

Adventure Goals

This part of the campaign introduces the difficulties faced by moreaus and franks in the form of racism and poverty. Introduce sympathetic shopkeepers and charity workers, honest cops from whom the heroes must conceal their identities, and corrupt cops who harass the poor because they enjoy it. One possible adventure during this time of adjustment follows.

Background

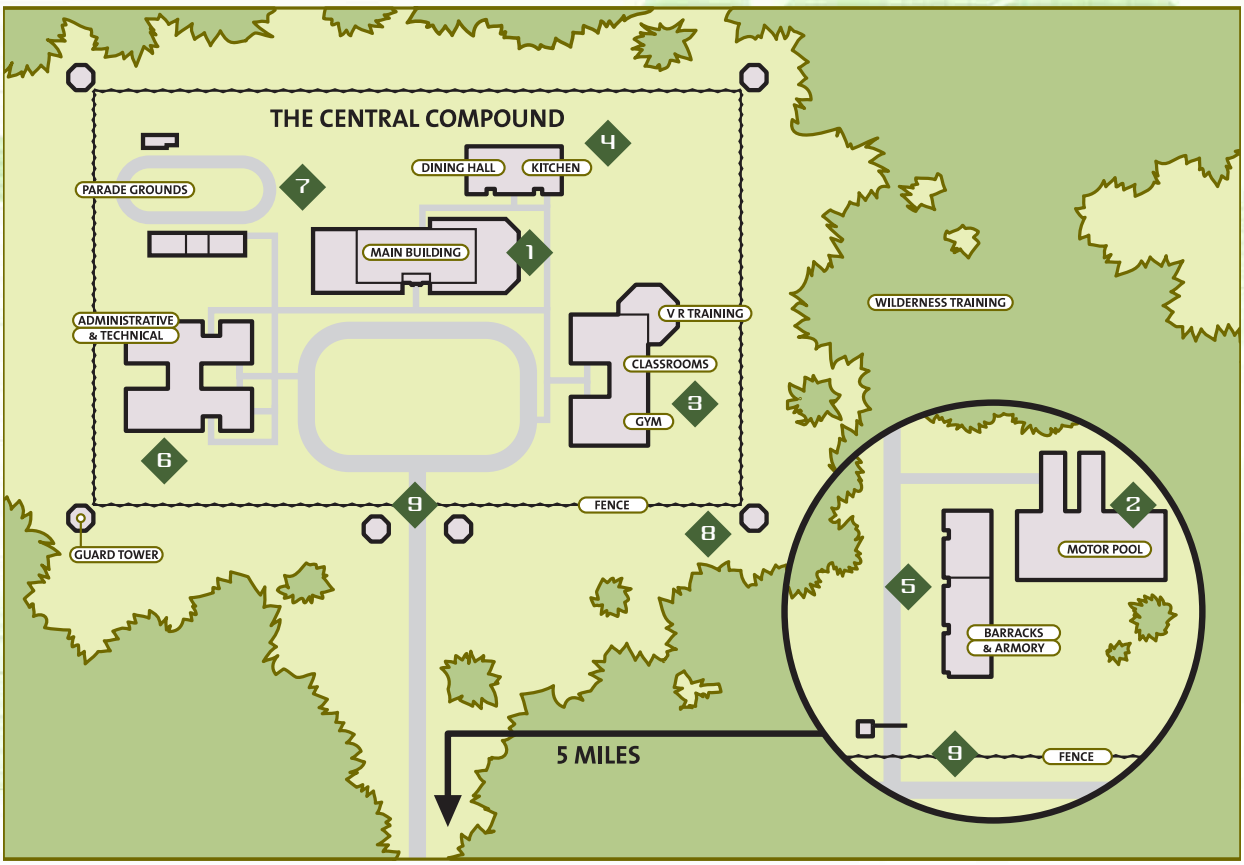
For two weeks, members of a local street gang, the Circle Eights (substitute another gang from recent headlines in your game's home city if appropriate), have methodically terrorized the residents of one city block. The neighborhood has a high moreau population, and the gang members treat moderate and overt moreaus more brutally than other residents.

Map Key

Central Building
All floors are concrete. Doors are wooden unless noted otherwise. Light is provided by fluorescent fixtures on the ceiling.

E1. Elevators. (Down only.)
E2. Elevators. (Up only.)
1. Trainee cells. These cells have metal doors with hinges and locks on the outside. Cells contain a footlocker, a sink, a toilet, and a fold-down cot.
2. Showers.
3. Underground Security Center. Here, four guards monitor the underground rooms (including the cells) via close-circuit television. There are 10 tear gas grenades and a box of 25 zip-tie handcuffs in this room.
4. Infirmary. There's little more equipment here than there is in a school nurse's office.
5. Debriefing. This room has three chairs and a conference table.
6. Discipline. These tiny cells are for those who require punishment for infractions.
7. Public Conference Rooms. These rooms have carpeting, conference tables, and comfortable chairs.
8. Labs. These ground floor laboratories are for cellular-level experiments.
9. Entry Hall.
10. Cold Storage. This room contains freezers and cryogenic storage for genetic material.
11. Ground Floor Security Center. Four guards monitor the ground and second floor rooms. This room also contains communication gear for all patrols, guard towers, and other buildings.
12. Front Desk and Lobby. This is the public face of the facility, used by visiting officials from the INS and other government agencies.
13. Hospital. This room handles injuries incurred in the course of training, but has only two beds for in-patient care. Other patients simply pass the healing time in their cells.
14. Vat Room. This room contains artificial wombs for growing new franks and moreaus.
15. Infant Care. Here moreaus and franks too young to care for themselves receive minimal attention.

The Central Compound
1. Main Building. (Two stories plus subterranean level.)
2. Motor Pool and Garage. (Single story.)
3. VR Training, Class Rooms, and Gym. (Two stories.)
4. Dining Hall and Kitchen. (Single story.)
5. Barracks and Armory. (Two stories.)
6. Administrative and Technical Quarters.
7. Parade Ground.
8. Guard Towers.
9. Gates.



Last week the violence escalated. Residents, particularly overt moreaus, began "jumping out" windows, "dropping" hair dryers into bathtubs full of water, and leaping from rooftops. The authorities label the deaths as suicides, but most neighborhood residents believe that's to avoid spending any more time in the neighborhood investigating. In fact, acts of violence against law enforcement officers increased about the same time the "suicides" began. Members of the Circle Eights, their identities and affiliation unknown to residents or the police, began hurling chunks of brick, concrete, and cinderblock from rooftops onto patrol vehicles. Police patrols are noticeably scarcer in the last few days. The violence may escalate to Molotov cocktails, or even shooting.

Many people are leaving. Some are gearing up for vigilante revenge. Local taverns fill with drunken talk of neighborhood patrols and payback. No one knows what the Circle Eights want, but the mood is getting ugly. The night the adventure starts, the Circle Eights kill an overt rat moreau and throw her off a roof. This sets the scene for a dramatic initial encounter with chases, fights, and shoot-outs on the rooftops.

SUPPORTING CAST

The weather is a major part of the supporting cast for this adventure. Decide whether the precipitation is rain or snow based on the season of your adventure and the location. Either reduces visibility by half, resulting in a -4 penalty to Spot and Search checks. The severe winds automatically extinguish any unprotected flames, cause protected flames (such as lanterns) to dance wildly and 50% of the time extinguishes them. Listen checks are at a -4 penalty. You may impose a -4 penalty on Balance, Climb, Jump, or Tumble checks if some part of the movement is exposed to the full force of the wind. See the Dungeon Master's Guide and Chapter Seven: Gamemastering of the *d20 Modern roleplaying game* for additional information on heat dangers, cold dangers, and weather hazards.

The neighborhood is another important supporting character. This adventure occurs in a low-income housing neighborhood of your urban area. The buildings are 5–12 stories tall. All have rusting iron fire escapes. Makeshift bridges of two-by-fours connect some rooftops. Old steam pipes about two feet in diameter connect some walls. Occasionally heroes should have to leap across eight-to-ten-foot wide alleys. Buildings have narrow ledges (no more than a foot wide) around them. Chase sequences and gunfights should alternate between the rooftops and apartment interiors. Scenes in apartments are opportunities for colorful, quirky NPCs, offering opportunities for greenhouses, pigeon coops, and other hobbies. One local might be assembling a car on his roof, or a boat. Throw in antennas, treat clotheslines as traps, and let neon signs provide the only illumination.

The Circle Eights are rabidly anti-moreau humans. The gang members are mostly low-level Fast/Tough ordinaries, but a few lieutenants are mid-level. The gang's leader is a mid-level Strong/Charismatic ordinary (make him a Heroic GM character using the rules at the end of Chapter Eight: Friends and Foes of the *d20 Modern roleplaying game*). They have typical equipment for their character type and level.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

Before running this adventure, decide where it happens and at what time of year. The neighborhood should be home to the heroes, which should narrow your choices of location. Those decisions affect what kind of weather complicates the plot and the action.

What do the Circle Eights want with that city block? Do they want the buildings for a combination of gang headquarters, drug factory, crack house, and general crime center? Someone could be paying the Circle Eights to commit this mayhem. If so, who? Are they trying to incite the moreau population to violence? A media-savvy villain could turn moreau violence from self-defense to a threat to "normal" humans throughout the city. Or perhaps the mastermind behind the Circle Eights has an interest in real estate, or in Prohibition-era loot buried under one of the buildings.

Do the heroes know the rat moreau whose death triggers the adventure? What's the relationship?

If the heroes took weapons from the INS soldiers at the camp and they use them on the Circle Eights or other opponents, the police quickly identify the caliber and weapons. The 5.7mm round is illegal for civilian use or ownership, so it sets off alarm bells in every law enforcement database, gaining the attention of the very people from whom the heroes escaped.

THE TRIGGER

Read or paraphrase this opening scene to the players to get the action going:

It's a wet, miserable evening. You're returning home from a hard day of work, or looking for work. You're frustrated by the lousy economy and the fear, ignorance, and hatred of the low-level corporate drones and civil servants you dealt with all day. Your crummy apartment isn't much, but even the company of roaches sounds better than the day you had. Then things get worse.

A few yards ahead of you, the corpse of an overt rat moreau drops to the sidewalk with a sickening thud. A snatch of laughter makes you look up, and you catch a glimpse of a pale face disappearing from the edge of the roof. The rat moreau doesn't move. Death might be a blessing after that fall. Rumors of murders hastily made to look like suicides have circulated through the neighborhood for the last week or so, but this is the first evidence you have seen.

The cops have better things to investigate than the death of a rat moreau, even in neighborhoods in which

they're less likely to get killed. Mood in the neighborhood is ugly, lately. Residents are angry, blaming the Circle Eights, a local street gang, for the violence and the police for not stopping it. You've heard talk about forming lynching parties and vigilante patrols. That kind of violence will only make the public and the authorities crack down on the residents. If anyone's going to stop this before it gets out of hand, it's going to be you. What do you do?

Experience Points

Between story awards for finding a place to live and dealing with the gang violence, and with encounters with gang members (not to mention critical skill checks to avoid dying on the rooftops), heroes should finish this adventure with enough experience points to reach 3rd level.

Campaign Stage 3: Outbreak

In the third installment of the campaign, INS agents arrive in the city and begin looking for the heroes. If the heroes used the weapons they took from the facility, the agents know the escapees are in the city. Otherwise they are looking in several cities at once and call on the police and military to cordon off the moreau neighborhoods, then go door to door, room to room, and building by building.

By now, the players know where their characters live. They know who their characters' neighbors are, and they think they know who their characters can trust. It's best to run this installment alongside some other adventure, giving the impact time to register. For example, you might want heroes working as bicycle messengers or drug couriers to discover for themselves the impact of barricades manned by soldiers claiming to be National Guard troops.

Adventure Goals

Your players, and their characters, knew that someone would come looking for them. Here is a way to deal with that. You decide whether you want to create an ongoing campaign opponent in the INS or whether you use this installment of the campaign to resolve the hunt for the escapees.

Quarantine

The city government claims there's been an outbreak of an unidentified disease among moreaus.

The Trigger

Read or paraphrase this opening scene to the players to get the action going:

Television news segments are full of medical personnel rushing ill-looking moreaus through hospital corridors. Doctors on TV say that some strange new disease has appeared in your neighborhood. No one you know is sick, and no one you know has heard of a moreau falling ill from something strange. The mayor says she has asked the governor for National Guard troops to quarantine your neighborhood until the disease can be identified and a treatment sought.

As heroes begin to explore the cordon thrown up around their home neighborhood, they notice that the "National Guard" troops have a lot of unusually high-tech communications equipment, and that a lot of people in dark suits and sunglasses mingle with the soldiers, people who look suspiciously like INS agents.

Infection

Rather than searching the buildings themselves, the INS uses robots. Use the Beetle reconnaissance robot detailed earlier in this article. Search teams consist of two AM General Hummers and a command truck (use the statistics for a moving truck from Chapter Four: Equipment in the *d20 Modern roleplaying game* if they become important) pulls up in front of a building and a team of soldiers and agents unloads 20 Beetles and turns them loose. The Beetles move through the building as directed by technicians in the command truck, who have blueprints for the buildings in their onboard computers. If the Beetles' audio-visual sensors pick up a heat source large enough to be a person, the technicians identify the room and soldiers from the Hummers move to the heat source's location and check the person's identity. Anyone who witnesses, or is subjected to, one of these searches immediately notices that there are no medical personnel present. That's very strange considering the National Guard is supposed to be assisting in pinpointing the outbreak point of the disease.

Excision

At some point, the heroes either run, or attack their pursuers. If they run, let informers and frightened neighbors point the INS in the direction they went. Pick a compelling location from the heroes' route and stage the final encounter there. This is an excellent opportunity to introduce the agent in charge of locating and silencing the heroes as an ongoing campaign villain, if you so desire. Just make sure he, or she, escapes the shooting!

If the heroes attack, you need a compelling location in your chosen city for their enemies' headquarters. An abandoned warehouse, an idle construction site, an unused commuter train station, a dark and empty parking garage, or a train or bus yard all make good locations for the agents' vehicles, computers, communication gear, and holding cells. Remember, the INS doesn't want the press seeing what's really going on. They'll pick an isolated, nondescript place for this operations center.

Experience Points

Plan sufficient encounters and critical skill rolls, as well as story awards for accomplishing the adventure goals, to provide suffi-

cient experience points for the heroes to reach 4th level.

Stand-alone adventure setups

The following short adventure ideas can be used to enhance the "Mean Streets" sample campaign or can be used as single-night diversions for any GeneTech campaign.

Blindeas

Heroes must disable a SAM missile site in a Central Asian city in this low-level GeneTech adventure.

Background

Turkmenistan has extensive hydrocarbon and natural gas reserves. Unfortunately, the biggest consumers are in the West. To export oil, Turkmenistan ships across the Caspian Sea to the Azerbaijani port of Baku. From there the oil flows through the Caspian Oil Pipeline across Iran to the Mediterranean port of Ceyhan in Turkey. Azerbaijan has its own oil supply that also uses the pipeline. The pipeline provides a tremendous economic boost for Iran, much to the dismay of the Saudi Arabian government. Iran and Saudi Arabia remain locked in a struggle for leadership of the Muslim world.

Azerbaijan plans to raise the tariff on imported oil again. Turkmenistan plans to sabotage Azerbaijan's offshore oilrigs as part of a larger campaign against Iran and its ally, the People's Republic of China. Such action could quickly escalate into a regional war. Many oil-importing governments have an interest in ensuring that this doesn't happen.

In response to increasing tensions between Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan, the Turkmenistan government lines its coast with surface-to-air missiles and truck-mounted anti-aircraft radar. Most of the equipment is Soviet-surplus, picked up for a song from Kazakhstan. Despite its age and relative inefficiency, it will interfere with any interdiction mission if it remains functional.

Supporting Cast

Missile Site commander (mid-level Strong/Charismatic, change occupation to Military and make him a Heroic GM character using the rules at the end of Chapter Eight: Friends and Foes of the *d20 Modern roleplaying game*), 4 radar operators (low-level Smart/Dedicated ordinary), 4 SAM crewmen (low-level Smart/Dedicated Ordinary), 12 sentries (low-level Strong/Tough ordinary, change occupation to Military). The sentries may be entirely or partially composed of moreaus (some are rats and some are canines, reduce skill totals accordingly).

All the supporting cast have light-duty vests, but only the sentries wear them and then only on duty. The commander, radar operators, and SAM crew all have 9mm MP-443 Grach pistols (use the statistics for the Glock-17, without the accuracy bonus). The sentries have NORINCO QBZ-97 assault rifles (treat as the M16A2, but capable of either single-shot or automatic fire and not burst) with six spare magazines each. They have no night-vision equipment, but they do have six fragmentation grenades in a box locked by the commander.

Things to Consider

As Gamemaster, there are a few decisions you must make to develop this adventure setup for your campaign. The first is what equipment your heroes have. There are a lot of opponents and all have body armor and military-grade weapons, so heroes' equipment can make the difference between a walk in the park and a suicide mission.

The second is where the target SAM launcher (a truck roughly the size of a semi-tractor trailer rig) and associated radar set are located. It could be in a hospital parking lot, a train yard, an outlying ravine, a tank farm, or in a warehouse complex.

What complications do you want to throw in? Does Department-7 abandon the heroes, considering them expendable? Do they have to rescue another unit trapped by unexpected reinforcements?

Finally, will Central Asian conflicts remain a major focus of your campaign or will the focus shift to the Middle East or China?

The Trigger

Read or paraphrase this opening scene to the players to get the action going:

Turkmenistan intends to launch a commando raid against Azerbaijani oilrigs in the Caspian Sea. Intelligence believes that this is part of a larger campaign meant to destabilize Central Asia and the Middle East. The raiders will leave from the port city of Turkmenbashy. We intend to stop them before they launch. You don't need to worry about how we'll do that. No one will be able to trace the accidents, illnesses, and malfunctions back to us. To get the rest of our resources into position, we must get past the air defenses around the city. Insert by foot, get to Turkmenbashy, locate the radar and SAM launcher designated Objective Idaho, disable them, and then move to Landing Zone Arapaho for helicopter retrieval.

What preparations do you want to make before entering Turkmenistan?

Hostages

A terrorist takes a major United States city hostage in this mid-level GeneTech adventure.

Background

An Uncorrupted cell places a number of computerized bombs around the city, all simultaneously transmitting unique

numeric patterns, each bomb receiving each other's pattern. If any bomb stops transmitting, the bombs detonate simultaneously. There are twenty bombs. The cell taking credit for placing them provides instructions on how to find the first bomb to demonstrate the reality of its threat. According to the anonymous caller, some of the bombs are laced with powdered uranium. While this does not make them nuclear bombs, uranium is a tremendously toxic. An explosion could disperse uranium dust across a broad area, lethally poisoning thousands. The numeric patterns use 512-bit encryption. 40-bit encryption would take a single personal computer 8,000 years to crack, so there's no time to predict the pattern and match it with alternate transmissions.

The Uncorrupted's demand is terse: The United States government must begin deporting all moreaus and franks within its borders within 24 hours. 10,000 deportees must leave the United States every day or the Uncorrupted will detonate the bombs. When the deportation is complete, the Uncorrupted will transmit the deactivation code and report the locations of all the bombs.

The first bomb is wired to the phone lines, so authorities assume that all the bombs are wired, and transmit to each other via the Internet. That makes it impossible to track them by their transmissions. If the bombs could be found, no one is completely sure they could disconnect them from the phone lines and reconnect them to some kind of modem fast enough to prevent the bombs from detonating. The authorities are trapped by their fear. If they don't alert city residents, someone, even a child, could find one of the bombs, tinker with it, and set off the explosion. If they do alert city residents, it could start a panic.

Supporting Cast

The primary supporting cast for this adventure is the bombs. They must be located in buildings and wired to phone lines, so it is possible that anyone could stumble across them. Possible additional cast members include an Uncorrupted bomb expert (high-level Smart/Dedicated ordinary, substitute Demolitions for Knowledge (earth and life sciences), and make him a Heroic GM character using the rules at the end of Chapter Eight: Friends and Foes of the *d20 Modern roleplaying game*) and Uncorrupted terrorists (mid-level Tough/Smart ordinary, no changes). The expert shouldn't have more than a Glock 17. Uncorrupted terrorists have MAC Ingram M10 submachine guns and concealable vests.

If you consider a serious plot twist (see Things to Consider, right), moreaus and franks from the Action Arm of the Underground should have light-duty vests and HK MP 5 submachine guns.

Things to Consider

As Gamemaster, there are a few decisions you must make to develop this adventure setup for your campaign. The first in this case is which city is threatened. Pick a city with which you are familiar. Barring that, pick one that's not familiar to your players.

Second, consider the reality of the threat. You may decide that the bomber is a lone nut claiming association with the Uncorrupted, or that a terrorist cell planted the bombs. If you want to go for a real plot twist, make the "terrorists" members of the Action Arm of the Underground. They're setting the Uncorrupted up for a frame as a way to put increased government pressure on the hate crime group. How far would they go to accomplish their goal? How do the heroes discover the truth? You may want to hide the truth from them for a few more adventures. Do the Uncorrupted claim their innocence and offer to help the authorities? Are they sincere, or are they trying to find the Action Arm to get revenge?

Third, decide how many bombs there really are. A lone nut may have planted one bomb and rigged a computer to transmit another signal, fooling authorities into believing that where they found one bomb there must be more. A terrorist cell may really have planted twenty bombs. The Action Arm of the Underground would certainly plant the first bomb to convince the authorities of the threat. If they are major villains of your campaign, they planted all twenty bombs. If they're misunderstood victims, they did not.

Complications may include run-ins with Uncorrupted vigilantes or chance encounters with street gangs. Who has the deactivation code? Where is he or she? Is that person willingly part of the plot? The villain might not be, or have, a bomb expert. Perhaps this one has been kidnapped, or his family taken hostage.

The Trigger

Read or paraphrase this opening scene to the players to get the action going:

This morning the city received a bomb threat. A group claiming to be Uncorrupted say they have twenty bombs planted around the city, some laced with uranium dust. The police got directions to one bomb. According to them, it's wired to the phone lines, transmitting a numeric code. The Uncorrupted say they used a 512-bit encryption for the code, and there's no way we can crack the code in the twenty-four hours before the deadline. If any bomb stops transmitting the code, all the bombs detonate. They demand that the United States start deporting moreaus and franks by the deadline. They want 10,000 deported daily until they're gone. It's impossible, of course.

The Uncorrupted claim that once their demands are met, they will transmit a deactivation code. You must find that code. Hit the streets. Knock heads together. Find these guys. We'll try to buy you time. What do you want to do first?

DELTA GREEN

PX Poker Night

An introductory *Delta Green*/d20 Call of Cthulhu scenario

By Dennis Detwiller and A. Scott Glancy
d20 Conversion by Brian Campbell

Secrets Man Was Not Meant to Know

This scenario is an introduction to the *Delta Green* campaign setting for the d20 System Call of Cthulhu *roleplaying game*. The world of *Delta Green* is the modern world we all know, only everything we know is wrong. Democratic government has been subverted, hidden conspirators control the destiny of nations, alien forces have meddled in human history since the dawn of time, and secret cults adore and worship fathomless evils lurking behind the veil of reality. At the dawn of the new millennium, a small group of conspirators have chosen to make a stand against these forces. These are the men and women of Delta Green. Originally part of the WWII-era Office of Strategic Services, America's first spy agency, Delta Green fought against these evils for nearly three decades. These are not the kind of evil men do, but the evil of absolute mindless destruction: the evil of the Cthulhu Mythos, made even more deadly by the men who would harness these forces to increase their personal power and dominate the world.

In 1969, a disastrous operation in Cambodia caused the Joint Chiefs of Staff to review Delta Green's mission. Embarrassed to discover that taxpayer money was being used to fight supernatural threats (threats that did not "officially" exist), the Pentagon disbanded Delta Green as an expensive and out-of-control agency that had strayed far beyond its original mission. Undaunted, Delta Green continued its crusade, without funding or official sanction, but with guts, determination and great personal sacrifice. Reorganized as a conspiracy based around a compartmentalized cell structure, the men and women of Delta Green work within the federal intelligence and law enforcement community, having to beg, borrow and steal the resources they need to keep the darkness at bay. Through this network of conspirators Delta Green identifies, investigates, and eliminates paranormal threats to the security of the US and the safety of its citizens. The cost is high. Members of Delta Green often lose their careers, their sanity, and even their lives.

Delta Green is always on the lookout to recruit more agents inside government agencies, but the organization also recruits "friendlies," non-federal law enforcement agents, academics, professional criminals, technical experts from myriad fields, and

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anyone who can be of use in the fight against the secret alien menaces that threaten the world. Most often recruited from the ranks of those who have had an encounter with the supernatural or paranormal and lived to talk about it, friendlies often get the most dangerous assignments Delta Green has to offer.

"PX Poker Night" is designed to introduce new characters to the campaign world of *Delta Green* and make them suitable for recruitment by Delta Green as a group of friendlies.

To get started, have your players create new characters who are serving in the Air Force, or have them select from the eleven pre-generated characters provided at the end of this scenario (unused characters become NPCs). Players may choose any of the base personnel other than Major Sprague, the base commander. Note that the character backgrounds are meant to reflect the characters' training and skills, not their present duties. If you plan to use this scenario to kick off a campaign, it might be better to have the players roll up their own characters rather than use pre-generated ones, many of whom are better suited for a single night's entertainment rather than a career as an agent of Delta Green.

The characters, whether rolled up or pre-generated, are meant to be Air Force misfits. They have a long string of misconduct charges and have perhaps done short stretches of time in the stockade. Owing to their persistent talents at screwing up, the characters have been stationed at Platte Air Force Base, hoping to quietly serve out the last months of their enlistment.

The Base

Platte AFB is the last stop on the road to dishonorable discharge. One step up from a military prison, the Spartan base consists of a dozen buildings and two airstrips in the middle of a Nebraska wasteland some 20 miles from Marion, the nearest town. Since the base staff consists of only twelve airmen, many of the buildings never see significant use. Once or twice a month, the Air Force flies decommissioned surplus aircraft to the base, providing rare moments of interest and activity. Helicopters, trainers, and even some jets find their way here before being sold to foreign governments or sold as scrap. The base personnel park the aircraft in the "graveyard" north of the base, mothballing them to remove fuel and lubricants, sealing up the planes' mechanical accesses to protect the vehicles from the elements.

With little to do, the personnel mostly just kill time, waiting for their terms of enlistment to end. Saturday evenings at 8 P.M., however, rain or shine, it's PX poker night. Not that it's actually held at the PX, or post exchange, anymore. These days, the game is held in the bare-bone remnants of the NCO club. Even Major Sprague plays, while those who are in the dog-

house with Sprague (usually half of the staff at any given time) pull duty (the guard shack and the air traffic control tower). PX poker night is one of the only high points in the week for the base personnel (the other being *Baywatch* reruns), anticipated due to the simple fact you can win your superiors' money.

This Saturday's PX poker night is about to take a turn for the bizarre . . . and deadly.

Getting Around Platte Air Force Base

This key and the maps on the following page give the Gamemaster a general description of the base and its environs with an eye toward answering questions characters may ask in the midst of running for their lives and looking for a way to defend themselves. Plenty of improvised weapons can be found about the base, and the Gamemaster should encourage the characters to arm themselves with whatever's available. It would be bad form if somebody didn't end up swinging a garden rake at the monster. See the Weapons Quick Reference sidebar on page 62 for game rules related to "found" weapons. Remember that attack rolls with improvised weapons suffer a -4 penalty to reflect the attacker's lack of proficiency.

It's important for the Gamemaster to remember that just because an item is not listed in an area description does not mean it isn't there. Quick-thinking characters should be rewarded if they come up with a reasonable suggestion. The characters aren't going to find a flamethrower, but they may be able to "MacGyver" together something within reason.

All the occupied buildings are equipped with fire alarms and sprinkler systems. The hangars, guard shack, motorpool, and NCO club only have fire extinguishers.

Except where noted, all the buildings have wooden doors capable of locking (Open Lock DC 10), are of cinderblock construction, and have plenty of glass windows.

Platte Air Force Base

1. Guard Shack
Little more than four concrete walls, a door, and a phone for making on-base calls, the base's guard shack is manned by one guard during the day and by two at night. Major Sprague doles out guard shack duty as punishment to subordinates who misbehave or whom he simply doesn't like, so guards here tend to be careless and resentful. On the evening of PX poker night, each airman positioned here bears an M-16A2 assault rifle with a basic load of 10 magazines and a Baretta M92 pistol with 3 magazines.

2. Administration Offices
This building houses Major Sprague's office as well as the desks of Lt. Shea, Sgt. Bach, and Airman Dunsany. Desks and rusty filing cabinets crowd the office "bullpen." All desks feature phones, but only the switchboard on Dunsany's desk allows for outgoing calls. Possible improvised weapons include letter openers and chair legs that can be broken and fashioned into crude clubs. A small supply room off the bullpen includes common military surplus store items like binoculars, parkas, walkie-talkies, flashlights, and first-aid kits. The building has a working sprinkler system and two fire axes set onto opposite walls.

A safe-like door leads from Major Sprague's office to the base's weapons locker. Platte Air Force Base has relatively few weapons for the simple reason that they are not needed (except for shooting the occasional rattlesnake). No personal weapons are allowed in the barracks. All weapons must be kept here.

Getting into the windowless weapons locker requires keys for the main door (Open Lock DC 25) as well as for a chain-link cage inside (DC 15). Further, the main door features a combination lock (DC 40) that requires a secret combination known only by Major Sprague (also the sole holder of the keys mentioned above). The major will not tell the characters the combination for any reason and likely will not survive the scenario, so it's extremely unlikely that the characters will get their hands on the weapons inside the locker. More to the point, the dramatic tension of the scenario will be greatly reduced if the players are allowed access to powerful military-grade weapons. Nevertheless, should the characters find some way inside the locker, they find the following:

- 6 M-16A2 assault rifles with 60 magazines and 4000 5.56mm rounds.
- 6 Beretta M92 automatic pistols with 18 magazines and 1000 9mm rounds.

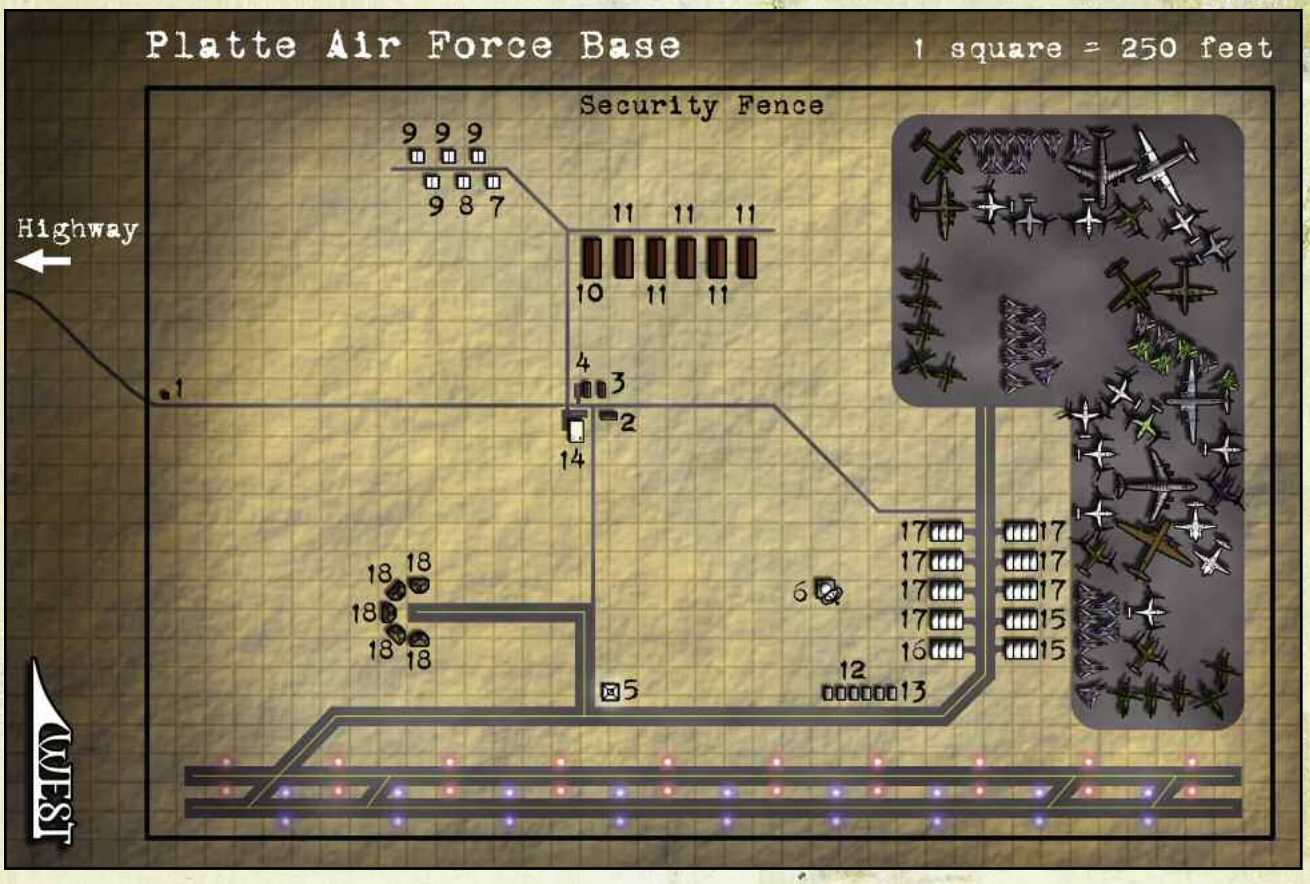
3. NCO Club
The "club" is little more than a disused building refurbished and outfitted with a few tables and folding chairs, a TV that gets lousy reception, dartboards, a foosball table missing one goalie, a warped pool table, and a sweaty beer fridge. Possible improvised weapons include pool sticks, beer and liquor bottles, full beer cans, and portable fire extinguishers.

4. Mess Hall
The mess hall is really more of a communal kitchen and dining room. Everyone cooks their own meals at Platte AFB. Possible improvised weapons include carving knives, cleavers, frying pans, and appropriately hot cooking oil.

5. Control Tower
The small, three-story control tower is always manned, despite the lack of traffic at Platte AFB. The radio array on the roof can send communications as far as Offut AFB in Omaha, Nebraska. The control tower is hooked into the radar tower through underground cables. While there are no improvised weapons here, binoculars and signal flares are available, color-coded to warn approaching planes of any hazards. The walls of the tower are made of poured concrete, and there are no windows in the tower save for the very top, where floor-to-ceiling windows surround the air traffic control station. Position two or three NPCs in the control tower on PX poker night.

6. Radar Tower
This tower contains the base's radar array and back-up generator, which can provide power to the base for just a few hours before running out of fuel.

7. Major Sprague's Bungalow
The base commander's quarters is a single-occupancy one-story house made of whitewashed wood. Improvised



weapons include the kind of basic goods found in a common domestic setting.

8. Lt. O'Shea's Quarters
Identical to Major Sprague's quarters insofar as the same kind of improvised weapons are available.

9. Officer's Quarters
The base contains four other officer's billets, identical to Major Sprague's bungalow. Only one is occupied by the base's executive officer. Unoccupied quarters are padlocked and empty.

10. Enlisted Dormitories
Looking a bit like a Motel 6, the enlisted dormitory is two stories tall and has rooms for thirty-two personnel. Only ten rooms are currently occupied. The only improvised weapons are the fire axes available at the ends of the hallways in the cabinets with the fire hoses.

11. Unoccupied Dormitories
These six buildings are unoccupied and padlocked shut (Open Lock DC 15). Each of the nearly empty buildings contains a half-dozen fire axes.

12. Disused Quonset Huts
These empty structures are nothing more than empty metal shells over a poured concrete floor.

13. Storage Hut
This old Quonset hut is filled with landscaping tools like axes, saws, pruning sheers, shovels, machetes, gas-powered edgers, and even a gas-powered chain saw. The hut also contains a gas-powered riding lawnmower used to keep the weeds around the runways trimmed.

14. Post Exchange
The base's post exchange resembles a large convenience store, offering frozen dinners, canned and dry goods, and all manner of unhealthy snack foods. Because the base has been trimmed back to a skeleton staff, many of the shelves stand empty. The PX is closed after hours, its wares protected by a rather shoddy (DC 12) padlock.

15. Motorpool
Several Hangars have been turned into parking garages for the base's vehicles. The following vehicles are available at the base motorpool:

2 Chevy Blazers, 4x4 utility trucks.
2 small tractors for towing aircraft.
1 snowplow mounted on a 2 1/2-ton 3-axle truck.
2 fuel tankers (5-ton 3-axle trucks).
2 fire trucks equipped for fighting aviation fuel fires.

16. Aircraft Maintenance Hangar
This rusty hanger contains the tools the base personnel use to maintain the base vehicles and to mothball decommissioned aircraft.

Improvised weapons to be found here include heavy wrenches, hammers, tire irons, crowbars, an oxy-acetylene welder, and gasoline (combined with bottles from NCO club, these would make excellent Molotov cocktails). The gasoline is kept in 55-gallon drums.

17. Empty Aircraft Hangars
Exactly as advertised. There is nothing in these cavernous metal buildings except dust, dirt, and oil stains.

18. Fuel Bunkers
Highly combustible fuel siphoned from decommissioned aircraft is stored in these underground tanks, which have been specially positioned to deflect any accidental explosion away from the base. Lighting the tanks results in a catastrophic explosion. Any characters within a 50-ft. blast radius suffer 20d6 points of damage. Characters can make a Reflex save to take only half damage (for whatever that's worth). Anyone within the radius but between the bunkers and base receives a +4 circumstance bonus to this save.

The Aircraft Graveyard
A metal labyrinth of abandoned helicopters, trainers, and cargo planes north of the base provides plenty of places to hide, but little in the way of improvised weapons beyond clubs fashioned from old metal. All aircraft weapons have been removed long before the craft arrived at Platte AFB. Anyone attempting to hide among the mothballed aircraft receives a +2 circumstance bonus to Hide checks.

Strange Happenings

For the past twenty-five years, strange lights—dissolving, reappearing, and moving at incredible speeds—have been sighted in Platte County. At first they were nothing but an oddity, but then the mutilations began. They started in 1981, and since then more than 100 cows and bulls have been found dissected, with no more than a dozen cows taken per year. Many farmers in the surrounding areas have switched from livestock to crops in order to avoid the issue completely. The lights are known in the area as the "ghost lights," and they have never been successfully photographed nor has any physical evidence of their activity (beyond animal corpses) been found. Sightings have become more and more frequent over the years, and by 1998, a sighting a night was not unusual. Even personnel at Platte AFB have seen them.

The Real Story

The strange happenings in Platte County are due to the presence of a small colony of creatures known as mi-go, or the Fungi from Yuggoth. Early in 1975, these alien creatures set up a small base in an abandoned mine in the northern part of the county so they could extract certain extradimensional materials they desired from the Earth. The "ghost lights" are actually mi-go flying about the countryside on one inexplicable errand or another, and communicating with each other using the bio-luminescent organs in their heads. In 1981, as part of their ongoing experiments in terrestrial genetics and psychology, the mi-go began stealing genetic material from area livestock and secretly kidnapping unsuspecting humans. They found that Platte County's isolation and lack of sophistication were useful in conducting their experiments while drawing scant attention. When it comes to having contact with humans, or performing tasks that might expose them to humans, the mi-go use biological "puppets" rather than expose themselves to scrutiny. The mi-go have also found that humans react less violently to these puppets, with their large intelligent eyes, humanoid form, and childlike stature. These puppets are the source of the stories among "abductees" and "contactees" of the race of aliens known as the "greys."

SONNET Arrives

Early in the afternoon before PX poker night, a large dark van bearing USAF markings, about the size of a UPS delivery truck, pulls up to the main gate of Platte AFB. The driver, a plain-looking man in a suit, flashes an Air Force I.D. and a bundle of orders and coded sheets. These are quickly processed and the van is let in the front gate; it parks near the administration building. Two men in USAF uniforms wearing heavy body armor and carrying M-16s with M203 grenade launchers step from the van and stand on each side, taking up guard positions. The man in the suit confers with Major Sprague in private and then returns to the van. The guards mount up and the van drives out to an isolated area of the airfield near the mothballed aircraft. Once the van is parked, the guards emerge again and the lights come on in the van. And so it sits, unmoving.

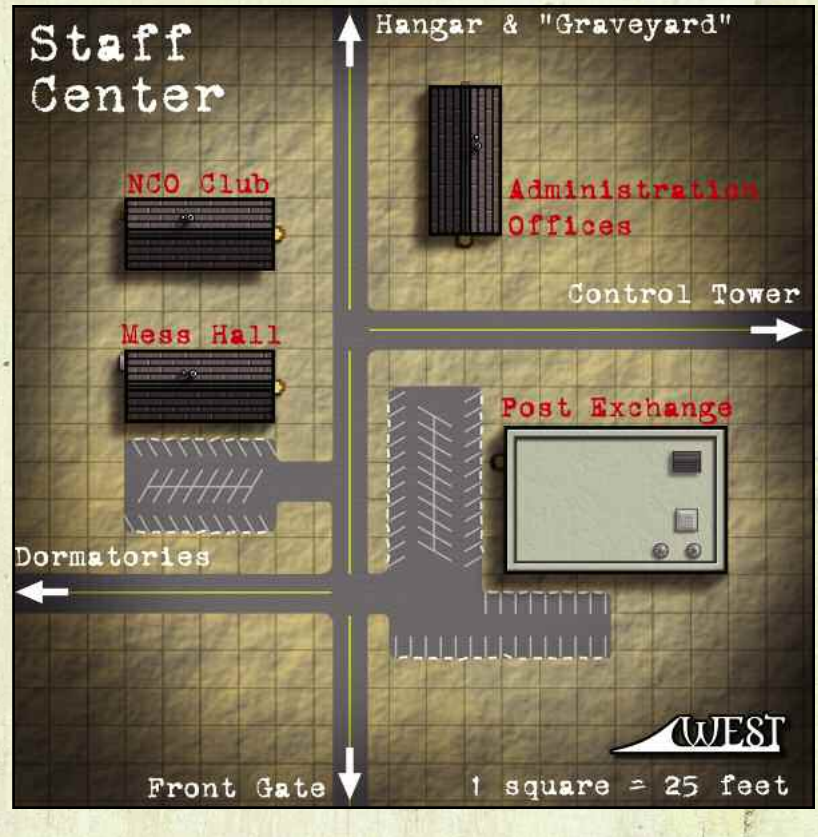
Over the PA, Major Sprague announces: "The van parked in the 'graveyard' is to be avoided by base personnel. Do not interfere with the visiting staff's classified operations. All personnel are confined to base until the visiting staff has left. That is all."

If asked about the van at the poker game, Major Sprague responds only that "It's authorized, classified, and none of our business." If asked how long they are going to be stuck on base, he says "I was assured it will only be a day at most." If pressed further, Major Sprague insists with all seriousness that the character drop the subject.

Anyone looking carefully (perhaps through binoculars) will notice a large amount of grounding strips on the bottom of the van, and that the guards are wearing exceptionally bulky helmets, like motorcycle helmets, which are covered in a dull reflective surface (either fact can be noticed with a successful DC 15 Spot check). Anyone within 100 yards who makes a successful Listen check (DC 15) hears a low hum coming from the direction of the van.

What's Really Happening

The men in the van are not USAF personnel. They are members of an intelligence organization that has slipped so deep behind walls of secrecy and compartmentalization that they exist above and beyond the normal chain of command. They are Majestic-12, a cabal of military, industrial, and intelligence community conspirators who've cut a deal with the race of aliens known to them as the "greys." Bartering US sovereignty for alien technology, the conspirators of Majectic-12 increase their hold on power while protecting their alien partners' mysterious agenda. Majestic-12 is one of the most powerful and deadly enemies that Delta Green has ever faced. Majestic-12



NCO Club
Storage
Toilet
Common Area
Toilet
Mess Hall
Storage Area
Storage Room
Toilet
Cold
Kitchen
Dining Hall
Office
Administration Offices
Weapons Locker
Supply Room
Closet
Major's Office
Toilet
XO's Office
Empty Office
Bull Pen
1 square = 5 feet
WEST

thinks they are in control of the situation, but in truth they have been manipulated into becoming the mi-gos' servants. However, since the mi-go keep their true appearance and intentions secret from Majestic-12, they sometimes run afoul of their unwitting servants. PX poker night is going to be one of those times.

One of Majestic-12's pawns is a top secret Department of Defense project called MOONDUST. Its "official" mission is recovering foreign aerospace technology, everything from crashed aircraft to spy satellites. In reality, MOONDUST dispatches USAF investigation and crash recovery teams, code named BLUE FLY teams, to hunt down and recover alien technology for MOONDUST's true masters, Majestic-12. The newly arrived van is part of one such BLUE FLY team.

In the van is a device code-named SONNET, which incorporates a crystal of extra-terrestrial origin. Another BLUE FLY team recovered the crystal in 1995 after an outbreak of madness and violence befell the isolated West Virginia community of Kanter's Creek. MOONDUST already had an interest in the area due to a high number of visual sightings of brightly glowing aerial phenomena, as well as some unexplained radar contacts, but the main factor that brought in MOONDUST to Kanter's Creek was the EM interference that blanketed the town. The interference disrupted all communications and electronics in a five-mile radius. Even county emergency could get no closer than two miles before their engines quit.

Deciding to err on the side of caution, the BLUE FLY team used their NBC (Nuclear/Biological/Chemical) gear when they walked into town. All thirty of the village's inhabitants had either gone mad or died; killed by their neighbors, trying to fly from the roof, or performing other acts of delusional lunacy. Town animals had fared little better. The brick-sized glowing crystal they found in the general store seemed to suggest itself as the source of the problem. With no sane or coherent survivors, how the crystal arrived remains a mystery. Suspecting that their shielded helmets were blocking some sort of electromagnetic signal that was able to affect both human bioelectric energy and electrical systems, the crystal was packed off in a lead-lined container. The deaths and madness were covered up as an outbreak of bovine spongiform encephalopathy, or mad cow disease.

The crystal was relayed to Project PLUTO, the Majestic-12 group responsible for studying advanced technology related to the alien presence on Earth. Despite being unable to identify the elements that composed the crystal, Project PLUTO R&D set to work harnessing its power since it held great potential as a weapon. Eventually, PLUTO combined the crystal with a Cold War-era EM pulse weapon that had never quite produced results, employing the crystal as the device's EM wave generator. They called this new weapon SONNET. PLUTO put SONNET on the developmental fast track and after a series of successful tests on lab monkeys and hardened electronics, they decided to field test SONNET against its intended target: the greys.

Majestic-12 doesn't wholly trust their alien "allies" and wants to be able to evict their "guests" if they ever overstay their welcome. Based on observations of grey technology, many Project PLUTO scientists believe that the greys may be

The Effects of the SONNET Electro Magnetic Device

The EM device has not been perfected, and although it can be deadly, it has some faults. It blankets an approximately two-mile radius. The basic effects of the device are as follows:

When initially activated, the EM waves cause everyone within a two-mile radius to make a Sanity check every half hour or lose a Sanity point. This level of exposure begins around 3 P.M. and continues until 9 P.M.

At 9 P.M. the device will be turned up to full power. This will require a Sanity check every minute to prevent a loss of 1d6 Sanity points. It's at this point, right in the middle of the poker game, that the lights go out and things start to get *really* weird.

If a Sanity check is failed, even if only one point is lost, the affected character must make a DC 10 Intelligence check. If it is failed, a visual hallucination occurs. These hallucinations are very transparent and are obviously illusory; bubbles float in the air, walls ripple, floors undulate, objects moving leave trails of scintillating lights. These illusions are extremely distracting. During the hallucinations, apply -6 to all skill checks. They last for a number of seconds equal to the distance the character's Sanity is from 100, minus their INT stat. So a character with a 64 SAN and a 12 INT would suffer a hallucination for (64+12=76, 100-76=24) twenty-four seconds. Again, the Gamemaster may wish to make Int checks for the players, so that the hallucinations simply occur without an obvious causal relationship between die roll and effect.

Any character inside a metal-walled building (like a Quonset hut) or blocked by a large metal object (such as standing behind a fuel tank or vehicle) receives a +20% bonus to his Sanity checks to resist the effects of the device. Any character outside who is wearing any type of metal over his head—such as an old steel infantry helmet or even a stewpot—also receives a +20% bonus. These bonuses are cumulative.

After the SONNET team has been killed (see below), the device pulses at a lower frequency, requiring a Sanity check every five minutes with a loss of 1d3 for every failed roll. Unregulated, these pulses prevent any electrical devices from functioning within a two-mile radius of the SONNET crystal.

vulnerable to EM weapons. The trouble is that it is hard to test out a new weapon on your "allies." So Majestic-12 has decided to engineer a fake "friendly fire" incident to test the weapon, making it look as if the attack was not deliberate.

Looking through their files, Majestic found that Platte AFB and the area surrounding it had long been the locus of many UFO-related incidents, including "false" and unidentified radar contacts, cattle mutilations, and the mysterious local phenomena of the "ghost lights." Best of all, it was an area of activity that the greys had not told them to keep clear of, thus giving Majestic-12 plausible deniability regarding any accidental shoot down. They even had a USAF facility to operate from, staffed by personnel who, due to their precarious military careers, could be encouraged to keep their mouths shut.

The Best Laid Plans . . .

The SONNET device is in the black van. It is operated by two scientists from PLUTO who regulate the emanations of the crystal within. The other Majestic-12 personnel at Platte AFB are a plainclothes security officer and his two armored goons. The van and the staff who came with it are shielded from the strange effects of the device by special gear, particularly by those bulky helmets. Obviously this leaves everyone else on the base vulnerable. The scientists' job is to keep the device functioning within the right parameters (a tricky proposition). Their equipment is really there to focus the emanations and keep them under control.

If the SONNET device brings down an alien craft, the PLUTO team will turn the device off by throwing a lever that drops the crystal into a lead-lined safe; like dropping the control rods into a nuclear fuel pile. Then a task force of Black Hawk and Apache helicopters (eight each) will be called via radio and will arrive from a staging area 100 miles away in just over half an hour. (Why so far away? Hey, they are trying to sneak up on aliens, here. Better safe than sorry.) The helicopter-borne commandos will secure the crash-site and an AH-130 "Spectre" gunship will take up an overwatch position above the base. Within an hour, a pair of giant C-5 Galaxy transport planes will land with a team to recover any wreckage. The base personnel will be read the riot act and warned to forget everything they saw, or think they saw. The wreckage will be loaded aboard the transport planes and flown to Majestic-cleared laboratories.

Of course, no plan, no matter how brilliant, ever survives contact with the enemy.

The big problem is that the crystal is not merely a source of EM waves. It is a fragment of a mi-go "gate-ship" that broke loose after it was struck by lightning over the Appalachians. A gate-ship is a mobile terminus for a gate so that the mi-go can travel vast distances without having to risk the hazards of the actual voyage. A gate-ship makes the journey instead and then serves as a conduit between the launch point and wherever the gate-ship has landed.

What Project PLUTO never realized is that the strange EM pulses given off by the crystal are byproducts of the gate-ship's propulsion system. The flawed emanations from SONNET's damaged crystal will react with any mi-go gate-ship in the immediate vicinity and cause its propulsion system to fail and crash. While this would seem to be exactly the desired result, there are going to be unexpected and lethal side effects. The reaction between the ship and the crystal will also cause a discharge of alien energy that will kill everyone whose is wearing the insulation technology designed to keep the EM wave from cooking their brains. So you cannot run the device without protection, but once the weapon takes out a ship the protection that lets the crew operate the device also kills them. Once the SONNET crew is dead, the crystal will continue emanating its unregulated wave, which dampens all electrical power sources in a five-mile radius.

And one other minor detail; the explosive reaction between the gate-ship and the crystal will "gate" something unwel-

come onto the base; a savage, hungry creature called a dimensional shambler.

Oops.

SONNET in Action

Over the course of several hours, the SONNET device affects the personnel at the base. (See the sidebar on p. 50 for details on what the device does in game terms.) It's up to you to play this out. The simplest way to handle this passage of time is probably to just describe how tensions all over the base seem to be high, with a couple of fights breaking out. Those involved, of course, will be assigned guard duty during the poker game. Potentially, the Gamemaster can involve a character in one of these altercations. It's important to remember that as the device erodes the base personnel's Sanity, those receiving the worst effects will be those outside, i.e. those on guard duty . . . the only people with immediate access to firearms!

The Gamemasters can apply the effects of the device to the characters whenever he or she prefers. The Gamemaster should ask the characters what they're doing for the afternoon (they have no prescribed duties today), and react accordingly. The Gamemaster needn't sweat every die roll resulting from the device's operation during this period, but may assume that the characters lose about 1d8 Sanity points over the course of the afternoon. NPCs will lose 1d12 Sanity points. (This doesn't happen all at once, so temporary insanity isn't going to occur.) Give a couple of characters brief, confusing hallucinations in which mundane items take on surreal aspects for a few moments.

As the poker game begins—which should be the effective start of minute-to-minute play—stage a hallucination or violent schizophrenia event with an NPC who barges into the game from guard duty and flips out. As the characters are dealing with this tense situation, there are a number of ways the situation can spiral out of control. The characters can control the action in this section if they take the initiative. Otherwise the Gamemaster directs the action.

Things Fall Apart

Most characters will be bright enough to realize that what's happening has some connection to the strange van out by the aircraft graveyard. When NPCs begin to go mad, and the characters begin feeling the effects of the EM weapon, the characters may want to take action against the men in the van or attempt to escape.

Escape will prove difficult but not impossible. Major Sprague will attempt to prevent anyone from leaving, and could grow violent if his Sanity points are low. Anyone on-guard at the gate will also have very shaky Sanity by this point and may fire on anyone making a break for it. Vehicles from the base motorpool will function until the SONNET team is dead and the emanations become uncontrolled. So unless the fleeing characters get two miles away before that happens, their vehicle will die and they will be stranded. Characters trying to walk out eventually will be picked up by helicopter-borne BLUE FLY commandos (if they don't go mad from the SONNET emanations first).

The men guarding SONNET will be watching how the base personnel react and will be ready for trouble. The armed security guards shoot anyone who approaches closer than forty yards, although they issue a verbal warning first. If the resistance against the "visiting staff" turns into a full-blown armed "uprising," the SONNET crew turns the weapon up to full power, if it isn't already, and calls for help from the security team at the staging area 100 miles distant. It takes the helicopters half an hour to show up. By then the mi-go ship will arrive and crash (see below). In the meantime the Majestic security men work as a team and will not allow themselves to be split up or separated. They will not prevent men from fleeing, but will return fire on any who shoot at them.

If the characters sit tight, the NPCs on guard duty will be the first to wig out. Unfortunately they are close to the characters and the other base personnel at PX poker night. If they become violent and attack other base personnel (primarily focused on Major Sprague as the source of their misery) the Majestic-12 Security men will callously not interfere so long as it's just the base personnel being attacked. They shoot any insane base personnel who look like they are going to fire on the SONNET device.

At the moment things seem most desperate for the characters, a horrible whine and an electrical sizzle are heard from near the van. Above the van, outlined in an arcing blue-white aura, is a large crystalline craft. Pulses of energy shoot between it and the van. Anyone wearing one of the protective helmets (i.e. the Majestic security men and technicians) is struck by bolts of energy and instantly killed. A stray bolt hits a transformer and all the lights on the base go out. The crystal craft suddenly plummets, sporadically glowing, falling among the mothballed aircraft on the north end of the base. It audibly impacts the aircraft, causing great damage to the aircraft. The crystal's light pulses brightly once, then fades to a dull glow. Anyone viewing this sight must make a successful Sanity check or lose 1 point of Sanity.

A DC 15 Spot check reveals that the strange light from within the van still shines, lit by the fragment of crystal inside the EM weapon.

The Characters' Predicament

After the chaos leading up to the crash, the characters may be saddled with several wounded or insane base personnel. The characters will need help to deal with the casualties, but as

Device #5491
Project SONNET test model,
High-Yield EM Screen
Approved for field test against UAC
8/24/02.
Reclamation operations are to follow any successful test.
Platte AFB, Platte County Nebraska,
twelve personnel. See attached dossiers.
All non-MOONDUST personnel deemed expendable.
Any casualties are to be retained for autopsy and tissue sampling.
68554271/68564372/78674383

long as the crystal is pulsing at full power all electrical devices on the base will not function. That includes the phone lines, the base radio, cell-phones, digital watches, and even the batteries in the base vehicles. Yes, that includes flashlights, too. Furthermore, none of the BLUE FLY helicopters or aircraft will be able to get within two miles of the base without suffering system failures and crashing. Of course, as long as the crystal is pulsing, the base personnel will continue to loose Sanity points, too. There may still be violently insane base personnel stalking the base, and as time goes by, more and more personnel will join the ranks of the insane. Shutting off SONNET will be a priority.

The Van

The van is locked and its windows are bulletproof glass, so the doors will have to be forced. A crowbar would do nicely. Each DC 15 Strength check to pry open the door takes a minute to complete. Inside the Project SONNET van are the two corpses of the scientists; their eyes have exploded and they appear to have suffered from massive internal bleeding (0/1 Sanity points). They wear the same bulky helmets as the guards outside the van, who also have the same symptoms. A large electronic device fills the back half of the van. Visible through a small glass window in a safe-like door of the SONNET device is a glowing piece of crystal. Characters who've seen the crashed ship will recognize the similarity of the glow both emit. The EM weapon is currently on. A chemically powered counter slowly ticks digital time. It gets faster and faster, cresting for a while, and then gets slower and slower. It operates on a five minute cycle, and the device pulses once at the crest of each cycle. The device can easily be shut down using a well-marked mechanical lever marked "emergency shutdown." It drops the crystal into a lead-lined safe.

Once the SONNET device is off, the characters may use the base's radio to call for help, or get in a vehicle and leave the base. Calling for help will bring the nearby BLUE FLY team running to secure the base (see below).

On the top of a stack of papers is a sheet stamped: TOP SECRET/ORCON/SONNET. The documents describe, in technical terms, the EM pulse device. A summary paragraph begins the document (see opposite.)

If the characters blast the van with weapons fire or burn it with Molotov cocktails they will still manage to turn off the device. Once the Sonnet device's self-monitoring systems detect any malfunctions, an automatic shut-down protocol drops the crystal into its lead-lined coffin. If they manage to blow the van to pieces, with dynamite or serious munitions they fortunately don't have access to, they could destroy the lead container, thus leaving them with no way to block the crystal's emanations. With any luck, your characters will not be so ingenious.

The Mi-Go's Predicament

The Platte-area mi-go were unaware of the device in the van or the clandestine operation underway. Once they detected the emanations of the crystal, they decided to perform a quiet fly-by of the base, in case it was one of their ships in trouble. Once they fell within the range of the EM fields the mi-go gate-ship malfunctioned. A horrible explosion occurred on board the gate-ship and a feedback of energy caused the two scientists in the van and the three guards to be electrocuted. The gate was destroyed, cutting the mi-go off from its brethren back at the mine. The lone mi-go on board the craft brought it down as well as it could, impacting roughly among the mothballed aircraft. The mi-go was pinned within the ship during the crash and is unable to free itself. The mi-go had six grey automatons on board, but only two survived the crash. They are far too weak to free the trapped alien. The mi-go is badly hurt and cannot contact the other mi-go in the area due to the condition of the ship, so it sends the greys to the nearby humans.

The mi-go's goal is to get a couple of humans to follow the greys back to the mi-go and free it so it can escape. It sees its predicament as an opportunity to learn: can it manipulate the humans' emotions enough to overcome their natural fear of the unknown?

First Contact

The crystalline ship lies among the wreckage of the aircraft on the north side of the base, about a half-mile from the barracks and NCO club. It is clearly visible from the NCO club and is still within range of the EM device. About ten minutes after the crash, two beings can be seen walking away from the crash site, followed by a glowing light. Carefully, the two of them make their way toward the nearest base personnel. These are the greys, moving under the direction of the trapped mi-go, and viewing them costs 0/1 Sanity points. A glowing ball fol-

lows them, hovering about waist level, making no movements except to follow the grey's movement. The greys are unarmed and approach the camp in an exaggerated gesture of surrender: arms up, far away from each other. All are naked. The apparent leader is holding a piece of crystal atop its head, balancing it carefully and replacing it when it falls to the ground. The leader says in a deep voice, with no nasal quality to it at all:

"Us require assistance, our dog are injured, and must be freed before it ceases. Us are weak, and the door are beyond our capacities. Us require assistance."

Just hearing this comment requires a Sanity check (0/1).

Speaking with the greys is a difficult proposition, but several things will be obvious about them:

- They do not understand plurals very well.
- What one hears, sees or learns, all the others know as well.
- They have little understanding of human culture; the apparent leader's wearing of the crystal atop its head is a ham-fisted attempt to approximate the human custom of insignia used to demonstrate rank.

What can be understood through the conversation, limited as it is, is that a "dog" (that is, a pet or something) is trapped in the nearby ship and that their fragile bodies are unable to move the wreckage enough to free it. They have come searching for help. The greys will answer simple questions very literally. If asked who they are, they assert: "We are."

Where do they came from? "A far place."
Why are they here? "To understand."
What is the glowing ball of light? "A mind."
What do they want with humans? "Mutual benefit."
Why do they mutilate cattle? "To understand."
Do they take people? "Yes."
Why? "To understand."

And so on.

If the characters are more demanding of an explanation before they help, the leader explains the following. It is in fact a prepared statement, one the mi-go have been using since their first involvement with the U.S. government (or rather Majestic-12). It is a total fabrication.

The greys say they are a race similar to ours from a planet in the M-31 star cluster. They travel through space because a catastrophe destroyed their home world and their parent species. They desperately need genetic material to propagate, because they were bred as a sterile, cloned species intended only for space travel and exploration. They want only peace and free trade with all species. They will put humans in contact with other races in the galaxy . . .

"When you are ready."

The greys will wait peacefully at the gate for one or more humans to accompany them back to their ship. If it appears that no one will come, the second grey grabs his side and collapses. The other will mill sadly about it, and point towards the ship and repeat: "He will cease." If the characters go with the greys to the ship, the ill one will seem to revive. It's a terribly obvious ploy, but its poor execution may give the characters some hope that the greys are harmless.

The Ship

The ship is a 30' × 30' eight-sided crystal, shaped much like an eight-sided die. Although it was heard to impact roughly,

its surface appears unmarked. The runway is pitted from the impact. The craft glows dimly and surrounding its hull are what seems to be debris from the inside of the ship, including three inanimate grey bodies which are badly burned.

The Entrance: The entrance appears as if by magic. It begins as an apparently solid surface which opens up, beginning with a pinpoint hole and silently widening to a diameter of six feet. The opening reveals a strange packed-dirt-like interior, like an underground tunnel. The tunnel interior seems much larger than the exterior of the craft would allow. A successful DC 15 Spot check reveals this fact, those who notice take a 0/1 Sanity loss. The tunnel is littered with debris and strange objects. The door stays open behind the characters as they enter.

The Intersection: Branch tunnels lead in three different directions; straight ahead, a smashed grey body can be found whose arms are broken at both the forearms and shoulders. This tunnel leads to the gate room where the "dog" is trapped.

The Gate Room: This is the room in the gate-ship that contained a transdimensional gate back to the nearby underground mi-go base. The room is spherical and all the surfaces seem to be made of clay. A very large chunk, what used to be the gate, has peeled off in a thick strip and pinned a small, hideous creature to the ground. The creature is approximately six feet long, not much bigger than a human being and is built somewhat like a crab, composed of sponge-like material covered in irregularly spaced bits of chitinous exo-skeleton. The part that appears to be the head changes colors as the characters watch, from red to blue and back again. It has no offensive-looking teeth or claws. If the players begin to move the rubble, the mi-go produces an exceptionally emulated whimper—it sounds almost eerily like the recorded sound of a dog. In its non-threatening condition, the mi-go only costs the characters 1/1d3 Sanity points. Lifting the pile from the "dog" requires a difficult (DC 22) Strength check that most likely will require the characters and the greys to work together. Once the mi-go is freed, the lights in the craft go out and the greys attempt to grab the characters with astonishing speed while the creature zips out the tunnel. Once the mi-go is gone, the greys collapse, inert and lifeless. The ball of light shoots out of the ship first in an attempt to distract anyone attempting to stop the mi-go's escape, then it flies away and disappears.

Characters or NPCs waiting outside see the glow of the gate-ship wink off. A dark shape, the mi-go, scurries out of the ship and into the maze of twisted aircraft wreckage after the glowing sphere shoots out first. Anyone viewing this must make a Spot check against the mi-go's Hide check (+10, +2 circumstance bonus). Those who succeed suffer a potential loss of 0/1d6 Sanity. NPCs are uninterested in following the "horrible thing" into the dark maze of wreckage and dusty aircraft hulls. Once within the refuge of the aircraft graveyard, the mi-go unfolds its wings and flies away into the dark night.

The Abduction Room: This room is to the right of the intersection, down a small corridor. It is the typical abduction room from UFO folklore, including bizarre medical tools and a human-scale examination chair with restraints. Its strange clay walls glow with a luminous white fungus that clings to every surface.

The Storage Room: The last room is cream-colored with six drawers set in the wall. Piled on the floor of this room are human artifacts, personal items like watches, wallets, glasses and such, some dating back almost fifty years. A random example would be an old watch with an engraving on the back that reads "For Jenny, 10-5-55"; the watch is still running. Each of the drawers contains a hollow shaped like a grey laying on its back with its arms at its sides. The interior is made of a plastic-like material that smells bad and is wet to the touch.

Oh, We Almost Forgot . . .

. . . the dimensional shambler. Brought to Platte AFB by this dimensional accident, this fearsome critter makes the characters' situation ever more problematic. It stalks silently through the base, picking off the personnel one by one, starting with isolated, wounded, and insane airmen who have been left on their own. It also will interfere with activities like turning off the SONNET crystal and any attempt to follow the mi-go once it scurries away—not because it has any affinity for the mi-go or the crystal, but because it tries to attack whenever the base personnel are distracted by another task. Given the chance, it also attacks the greys and may even go after the trapped mi-go. Once freed, however, the mi-go will be able take wing and leave the "helpful" humans to their fate. The characters may be able to kill the dimensional shambler with the few weapons available, or they may try to flee from it. Unfortunately, since it can phase through walls, barricading themselves inside a secure location is not an option. It will pursue the base personnel until it loses all but its last three hit points, then it will flee by phasing out of this dimension. Fortunately it stalks the base personnel slowly, since it has no idea that the BLUE FLY commandos are on the way. The Gamemaster should remember to play the dimensional shambler as cunning and stealthy. It will not simply charge into the characters' gun sights.

We're From the Government, We're Here to Help

Once the characters have freed the mi-go, turned off the SONNET device in the van, and disposed of the dimensional shambler, there is still one last problem: the BLUE FLY Team.

They arrive on the scene with an Apache AH-64 attack helicopter to scout the area forty minutes after the crash. If the characters have not deactivated the SONNET crystal, they

will be treated to a fireworks display as the EM pulse of the crystal causes the helicopter to crash outside the base's perimeter fence. Following this, the BLUE FLY team will not attempt to approach the base by helicopter, but instead fly to within four miles, put a team of eleven commandos down on the ground and have them march to the base. The team does not arrive until two hours after the crash, but are equipped with the proper protection gear to survive the march without losing Sanity points. Once they get to the base they deactivate SONNET, secure the crash site, kill any hostiles (madmen, the dimensional shambler, any characters who don't know when not to pick a fight), and round up the other base personnel. The survivors will be checked for injuries and delivered for debriefing.

If SONNET is deactivated, the AH-64 circles the base and relays observations back to the rest of the team. If the characters are out in the open and being chased by the dimensional shambler, the AH-64 hoses the beast with its chain gun. The AH-64 gunner has a ranged attack bonus with the chain gun of +7.

Five minutes after the AH-64 scouts the base, a Black Hawk arrives and disgorges a team of commandos who proceed as described above.

If the characters take a base vehicle and flee, either getting past the two-mile EM radius, or leaving after the SONNET device is deactivated, they will be quickly tracked down and intercepted by the BLUE FLY helicopters. Sharpshooters disable the vehicles with gunfire if the characters refuse to stop. All fleeing base personnel will be taken into "protective custody" and debriefed. Characters trying to walk away from the base will be treated the same way. Characters picked up on the open road are advanced to the end of the scenario.

Once the BLUE FLY commandos take the characters into custody, the scenario is at an end. Tell the characters that they are flown to Offut Air Force Base in Omaha where they receive excellent medical care, which may seem perhaps a bit too good. Are the Air Force doctors examining them like lab rats? Then a team from Air Force Intelligence debriefs them at length and warns them not to speak to the press or public about the incident. The "alien" aspects of the incident are classified Top Secret. The characters are finally told that an experimental device being temporarily stored at Platte AFB (but not in operation) malfunctioned, causing extensive hallucinations among the staff; there were no aliens, no documents referring to "expendable" personnel, no monsters, and so on. It was all in the characters' minds, and if they ever tell anyone differently they'll find themselves in jail for espionage and treason. Finally, the Air Force offers the surviving base personnel immediate honorable discharges with full benefits and a fat compensation bonus of $25,000.

Sanity Rewards

Freeing the mi-go grants no Sanity reward since, after all, they were tricked.

Killing the mi-go: 1d6 (but only if the encounter with the mi-go turns violent).

Killing the dimensional shambler: 1d10.

All base personnel survive: 1d8 (unlikely, but possible).

If the Gamemaster is running "PX Poker Night" as a one-nighter, the scenario ends here. If it is being run as an introduction to a *Delta Green* campaign, the Gamemaster should give the character the "Recruitment Pass." Being recruited by

Scenario Timeline

The following timeline is meant to aid Gamemasters in the effective running of this scenario. Events at Platte AFB take place over little more than ten hours, with the real meat of the action taking as little as 50 minutes before it is resolved. The Gamemaster should always stress the urgency of the situation to the characters.

1:00 P.M. The van from Project MOONDUST arrives at the front gate.

3:00 P.M. The SONNET device is activated at low levels of emission. The base personnel feel the first effects of the SONNET device.

9:00 P.M. The SONNET device is turned up to full strength. Base personnel begin suffering catastrophic Sanity losses.

9:05 P.M. The mi-go gate-ship appears, violently reacts with the SONNET device, and crashes. The dimensional shambler is gated onto the base by the reaction. It hides and begins to look for lone base personnel to pick off one at a time.

9:15 P.M. The two greys emerge from the gate-ship.

9:20 P.M. The two greys cross the airfield and approach the base personnel.

9:40 P.M. The first Apache helicopter arrives on the scene to scout out the base and the crash site. It crashes if SONNET is not deactivated.

9:45 P.M. If the base personnel deactivated SONNET, the BLUE FLY commandos arrive by helicopter to secure the base.

11:00 P.M. If SONNET was not deactivated by the base personnel, the first BLUE FLY commandos arrive by foot to secure the base.

Special Time considerations: BLUE FLY commandos arrive at the base 30 minutes after the base personnel succeed in making a radio or telephone call for help.

Delta Green should allow the characters a +1d2 Sanity bonus.

The Recruitment Pass

Everything seems to have been wrapped up until, weeks after the incident, while performing some everyday task like shopping or eating in a restaurant, the characters are approached individually by a stylishly dressed black woman with a head full of long braids and sporting a tiny set of blue-tinted sunglasses. She introduces herself as "Ms. Green" and offers the characters her condolences over the loss of their "buddy" and presents the character with an obituary. The obituary chronicles the death by natural causes, of one of the other surviving base personnel. Gamemasters should improvise something to fit the survivor's situations. Insane survivors could "commit suicide" in a mental institution. Sane survivors could suffer a fatal car crash. Injured survivors could die of an "infection" related to their injuries. If no other personnel survived the incident at Platte AFB, she merely tells the characters that they are in danger. The characters will probably have a few questions.

Why are we in danger?

"Because you saw things not meant to be seen. Someone has decided that bribes and threats are not enough to ensure your silence and more permanent solutions are being arranged."

Who were those guys at Platte?

"They're a faction in the intelligence community who've got more ambition than good sense."

What are they up to?

"Selling out this country to invaders."

What invaders?

"You've already seen them."

If this faction and the invaders are working together, then what was happening at Platte AFB?

"Some of the worst fights happen in the best families, y'know?"

Who are you?

"I'm with another faction. One that doesn't want to kill you."

What is the name of your "faction?"

"If the intelligence community were a family, we'd be the uncle nobody talks about."

What does your faction do?

"What we do is more like pest control than law enforcement. What you saw in Nebraska is just the tip of the iceberg. There are things out there that need putting down. Things nobody believes in."

Can you protect us?

"No. The President of the United States couldn't protect you. He couldn't protect himself if these guys wanted him dead. The best we can do is hide you."

What do you want from us?

"Information. Your official report to the Air Force has been censored. We want to know what really happened at Platte AFB. You help us, and we'll help you stay alive. We may even be able to give you a job."

Obviously, Ms. Green will not be very forthcoming, but she will tell them that she is a member of an "agency," the name of which she cannot reveal. In truth, she is a member of the Delta Green conspiracy. Delta Green is opposed to Majestic-12 and its unholy alliance with the greys, and also suspects that the greys are a front for a much darker, even more alien force. If the characters balk at joining the conspiracy, feel free to have Ms. Green mail them a few more obituaries over the next couple of weeks showing that the survivors of Platte AFB are dying (of natural causes) at an alarming rate. If there were no other survivors, the Gamemaster may want to have the brakes on one of the character's car mysteriously fail. Just about the time they're thinking about running for it, Ms. Green will make another recruitment pass. She offers them new identities and a safehouse in rural Oregon in which to hide. She also suggests that as "un-persons," the characters might prove useful to her organization doing "deniable" operations for them. After all, on whom can they inform if they never know whom they are working for?

If the characters agree to Ms. Green's proposition, they have just been recruited by Delta Green. Now their real problems are about to begin.

NPCs and Enemies

Major Louis Sprague,
Base Commander, Platte AFB, NB

Major Sprague can thank his alcoholism for his current plum assignment. In addition to ruining his career, his love of drink has also seriously eroded his health. Sprague is not terribly imaginative or flexible in his thinking, brooking no talk about "ghost lights" or UFOs. As far as he's concerned, the subject was closed when the Air Force ended Project Blue Book in 1969.

Sprague permits no deviations from his orders, and never fails to remind his soldiers that staying in his good graces is all that stands between them and a court marshal or dishonorable discharge. When things get dangerous, Sprague is of little or no help. In fact, thanks to his already limited Sanity, he'll be an impediment.

Despite his deteriorating health, Sprague remains a strong, imposing man (he used to play football in high school and still looks the part). The 41-year-old Caucasian man stands 6'2" tall and weighs 210 lbs. A florid face and heavily veined, thick nose show the signs of long-term alcohol abuse. Often-bloodshot, gray eyes stare out from his regulation-cut steel gray hair.

Major Louis Sprague: Male 2nd level; HD 2d6-2; hp 7; Init -1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 9; Atk +4 melee (1d3+2, punch) or +1 ranged (2d10, rifle); SV Fort +3, Ref -1, Will -1; Str 14, Dex 8, Con 9, Int 12, Wis 11, Cha 13.

Skills: Appraise +5, Computer Use +4, Craft (electronics) +5,

Diplomacy +4, Drive +2, Jump +7, Listen +3, Knowledge (accounting) +3, Knowledge (military science) +6, Repair +4, Spot +5, Wilderness Lore +5.

Feats: Dodge, WP (rifle, thrown).

Equipment: Weapons locker keys.

Sanity: 55.

Majestic-12 Security Officer

The following stat block covers the three Majestic-12 security guards who stand watch outside the mysterious van (at least until they are killed). It's unlikely that the PCs will have justification (or, for that matter, the ability) to get into the van before the mi-go ship arrives, but if they do, use the security officer stat block (without body armor, combat skills, or weapons) to simulate the two scientists within.

Majestic-12 Security Officer (ruthless killer): Male 2nd level; HD 2d6+4; hp 13; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 17; Atk +4 melee (grapple, special) or +4 ranged (2d6, .45 pistol); SV Fort +5, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 15, Wis 11, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +4, Drive +7, Knowledge (electronics) +7, Hide +7, Listen +5, Open Lock +7, Move Silently +7, Search +6, Sense Motive +5, Spot +5, Tumble +5.

Feats: Martial Arts, Weapon Focus (grapple), Weapon Proficiency (pistol).

Equipment: Kevlar and shielded helmet (+5 armor bonus).

Sanity: 55.

BLUE FLY Commando (elite soldier): Male 3rd level; HD 3d6+9; hp 22; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 19; Atk +6 melee (1d6 +3, punch) or +5 ranged (1d10, Baretta M92) or +6 ranged (2d6, M-16); SV Fort +6, Ref +5, Will +2; Str 16, Dex 14, Con 17, Int 12, Wis 12, Cha 11.

Skills: Climb +9, Heal +7, Hide +8, Jump +8, Listen +6, Move Silently +8, Search +5, Spot +6, Swim +6, Use Rope +5, Wilderness Lore +3, Drive or Pilot +5.

Feats: Martial Artist, Weapon Focus (M-16), Weapon Proficiency (pistol, rifle).

Equipment: Heavy body armor and shielded helmet (+7 armor bonus).

Sanity: 60.

The Mi-Go (a fun guy from Yuggoth): CR 2; Medium-size Aberration (lesser independent race); HD 2d8+2; hp 12*; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 20 ft., fly 30 ft. (poor) in terrene atmospheres, 120 ft. (perfect) in deep space vacuum; AC 12; Atk 2 nippers +1 melee or +3 ranged; SA nipper snatch, spells; SQ damage reduction 10/+2, darkvision 60 ft., blindsight, immunities, resistance to cold 30, vulnerable to drowning; SV Fort +1, Ref +2, Will +5; Str 10, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 17, Wis 15, Cha 6.

Skills: Concentration +6, Disable Device +10**, Hide +6, Knowledge (mathematics) +8, Move Silently +6, Psychic Focus +5, Repair +13**, Search +7, Speak Other Language (English) +4, Tumble +5.

Feats: Dodge, Mobility, Point Blank Shot; *Psychic Feat:* Sensitive.

Sanity Loss: 0/1d6.

*When the player characters first encounter the mi-go, it has 0 hit points due to injuries from the crash.

**Mi-go receive a +5 racial bonus on all Repair and Disable Device checks.

Nipper Snatch (Ex): A favorite mi-go tactic is to swoop down upon an unsuspecting target, grab her in its pinchers, and then fly into the sky with its prisoner. This works just like a grapple, except that the mi-go gets a +4 bonus on its grapple check and the victim gains no free attack. An opponent taken by surprise (flat-footed) may not resist the snatch the round she is grabbed, but may attempt to break free on the next or subsequent rounds. The mi-go either carries a snatched foe up to a great height and drops her, or else continues upward, its speed ever increasing as it leaves the atmosphere behind and its abductee's lungs burst.

Spells (Ex): The mi-go encountered in "PX Poker Night" knows the following spells: *create gate*, *cloud memory*, *deflect harm*.

Typical Grey (mindless puppet): CR 1/2; Medium-size Construct; HD 1d10; hp 5; Init -1 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 9; Atk -2 melee (grapple, special) or -1 ranged; SQ construct traits, darkvision 60 ft.; SV Fort —, Ref -1, Will +0; Str 6, Dex 9, Con —, Int 4, Wis 10, Cha 6.

Sanity Loss: 0/1d3.

Construct Traits (Ex): As constructs, greys are immune to mind-influencing effects, poison, sleep effects, paralysis, stunning, disease, and death effects. Constructs cannot heal damage on their own. A construct is not subject to critical hits, subdual damage, ability damage, or ability drain. It is immune to any effect that requires a Fortitude save (unless the effect also works on objects). When reduced to 0 hit points or less, it is immediately destroyed.

Dimensional Shambler (cunning brute): CR 3; Large Outsider (lesser independent race); HD 3d8+9; hp 24; Init +4 (Dex); Spd 40 ft.; AC 12; Atk claw +7 melee (1d6+6); SA improved grab, planar jaunt; SQ damage reduction 5/+1, darkvision 60 ft., intuit direction; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +3; Str 19, Dex 11, Con 17, Int 8, Wis 11, Cha 8.

Skills: Escape Artist +6, Hide +2, Listen +5, Move Silently +4, Wilderness Lore +4.

Feats: Improved Initiative.

Sanity Loss: 0/1d10.

Improved Grab (Ex): If a dimensional shambler hits with a claw, it deals normal damage and attempts to start a grapple as a free action without allowing its opponent a free attack. The shambler uses its claw to hold the opponent. Assuming

the victim doesn't break free on its action, each successful grapple check it makes during successive rounds automatically deals the damage listed for the claw, or the shambler can choose to take the victim with it on a planar jaunt.

Planar Jaunt (Su): A dimensional shambler can shift between the physical world and another plane of existence as a free action, then shift back to the physical world as a move action. If a dimensional shambler has a Medium-size or smaller foe grappled, the foe also shifts planes with the shambler.

The Frayed Ends of Sanity

Over the course of "PX Poker Night," lots and lots of characters are going to go very, very insane. This section gives tips on how to handle insanity for each character. If your players are experienced *Call of Cthulhu* enthusiasts, you might want to let them handle their characters' slide into insanity themselves. Otherwise, use the information below to push them in the right direction, perhaps taking players aside and giving them a new (insanity-driven) motivation. For NPCs, simply use these guidelines.

2nd Lt. Michael O'Shea: O'Shea begins to grow restless as he loses Sanity. He won't understand what's wrong, but will not be able to keep still, fidgeting non-stop. Temporary insanity causes O'Shea to babble incoherently with terror. Indefinite insanity leaves him with amnesia, unable to understand how he came to be at Platte AFB. At zero Sanity, O'Shea is overcome by a suicidal mania, taking his life by either crashing a car or throwing himself off the roof of the control tower.

Technical Sgt. Robert Bach: Sgt. Bach becomes more irritable as he loses Sanity, but reserves his ire for the base's officers, since officers ruined his career. If temporarily insane, Bach suffers hysterical outbursts of anger directed at the officers, berating their incompetence, dishonesty, and sloth. If indefinitely insane, Bach becomes convinced that Major Sprague and Lt. O'Shea are somehow involved with the events at the base, and that steps must be taken to stop them. At zero Sanity, Bach attempts to murder any officer he sees. When he runs out of officers, everyone starts to look like an officer.

Staff Sgt. Frank Long: As he loses Sanity, Sgt. Long suffers from an inability to focus. He becomes especially distracted in the presence of any smokers (such as Airman Ligotti), or by open flames, seemingly becoming stupefied by the fire until it is extinguished. Temporary insanity causes Long to obsessively insist that fire is the only way to deal with the problems on the base: the strange van, the greys, the dimensional shambler, etc. He attempts to obtain or create Molotov cocktails or other incendiary weapons. Indefinite insanity results in pyromania, which manifests in a conviction to burn the base to the ground using the aviation fuel trucks. Once his Sanity has reached zero, Long tries to commit suicide by immolating himself.

Cpl. Bob Price: As his Sanity slips, Cpl. Price becomes angry over the slightest confrontations, snapping and cursing even at officers. He becomes even more enraged if put on report for his bad behavior. If temporarily insane, Price single-mindedly attacks the (apparent) cause of his Sanity loss, ignoring the safety of others. If indefinitely insane, Price becomes incoherent, unable to communicate with anyone. Any loss of Sanity thereafter provokes a violent reaction. At zero Sanity, Price is just a rabid dog, uncommunicative and homicidal.

Cpl. Ted Klien: As Klien's Sanity drains away he becomes preoccupied with his appearance. He continuously checks his eyes, gums, and complexion, convinced that he looks sick. Temporary insanity results in panicked flight. Indefinite insanity brings hallucinations that his skin, particularly his face, is peeling and flaking off, causing him to seek first aid. Permanent insanity causes him to believe he has withered away like a corpse. In such a state, Klien becomes intensely phobic about letting people see him, fleeing scrutiny and hiding his face.

Airman Tommy Ligotti: Initial Sanity loss causes Ligotti to become paranoid about some of the missing items around the base. He gets the unreasonable idea that the men in the van are with Air Force OSI and are here to investigate him. Temporary insanity results in paranoia; Ligotti suspects all around him of being part of the current threat. Indefinite insanity causes Ligotti to become obsessed with burning down the PX to cover up the packs of cigarettes he's been lifting. He will slip away from the group to accomplish this, if able. Later, he begins to worry that someone knows about the liquor he stole from the NCO club, and will take similar actions to cover the tracks of that crime. At zero Sanity, Ligotti believes that the other base personnel are here to rub him out, and that he's got to kill them first.

Airman Laura Dunsany: As Dunsany loses Sanity, she becomes more and more arrogant, prone to open insubordination of her superiors and condescension to her cohorts. If suffering from temporary insanity, Dunsany throws a fit, raging against the stupidity and incompetence of all around her and accusing everyone else of getting her into this mess. If indefinitely insane, she disconnects from whatever is happening around her, wandering away and babbling about all the idiots in her life. At zero Sanity, Dunsany becomes stupefied, curling up like a fetus, totally unresponsive to the world.

Airman Lynn Carter: After her first Sanity loss, Carter becomes easily offended by any contact with the male base personnel. She perceives verbal exchanges as come-ons and physical contact as unwanted advances. All this (perceived) attention makes her very anxious. Temporary insanity causes Carter to flee in panic, looking for a safe place to hide. If indefinitely insane, Carter becomes phobic about any physical contact with others. As her Sanity slips toward zero, she becomes horrified by any physical contact with *anything*: people, clothes, the floor, water, and even her own skin.

Airman Brian Lundy: Sanity loss causes Lundy to become more and more jumpy (particularly in the dark) as he begins to feel afraid for no explainable reason. Temporary insanity results in hallucinations that provoke thoughtless panic. If armed, Lundy may fire at any movement. Indefinite insanity causes Lundy to believe that the darkness is closing in on him; he may attack or flee from nearby shadows. At zero Sanity, Lundy becomes catatonic with fear whenever in the absence of light.

Airman Clark Smith: As his Sanity erodes, Airman Smith becomes more aggressive and short-tempered, likely to either start or join any fight that might break out. Temporary insanity causes Smith to faint dead away following a short screaming fit. If indefinitely insane, Smith instigates violent and lascivious attacks on the female airmen. At zero Sanity, a naked smith stalks and attacks anyone he encounters.

Airman Randy Campbell: Like many of the others, Campbell begins to feel uncomfortable and irritated for no explainable reason as he begins to lose Sanity. If he goes temporarily insane, he becomes catatonic for about 10 minutes. Once he snaps out of it, he denies that it ever happened. If he becomes indefinitely insane, Campbell becomes enraged at Cpl. Klien, attempting to beat the man to death for no other reason than he "always hated his face." If reduced to zero Sanity, Campbell falls into a near catatonic stupor, engaging in clumsy acts of self-mutilation unless restrained.

Major Louis Sprague: Major Sprague's early Sanity loss manifests as paranoia about his authority being undermined. He reacts angrily to any questioning of his decisions, becoming even more a martinet than usual. Temporary Sanity loss causes Sprague to deny anything unusual is going on. Contradictions will be met with hysterical accusations of insubordination. With higher or indefinite Sanity loss, Sprague becomes convinced that the men are mutinying. He arms himself with weapons from the weapons locker and attempts to kill the mutineers.

Pre-Generated Characters/ Base Personnel

Prior to beginning play, photocopy and clip the following character dossiers, passing them out to your players. Divide characters as you wish, but there's certainly nothing wrong with allowing the players to read over the short character descriptions and choose the character they'd most like to play. Surplus characters become NPCs.

Remember to station a handful of NPCs at the guard shack or control tower. All player characters should attend the PX poker night game. It is, at least until tonight, the highlight of their month.

2nd Lt. Michael O'Shea, Executive Officer Platte AFB

2nd Lt. O'Shea is at Platte AFB to disabuse him of the delusion that he can travel at Mach 3 when he's not in an F-16. O'Shea is an adrenaline junkie. He's all about the speed. He's had his driver's license revoked for street racing and other moving violations. Then he violated his CO's order not to drive without a license. Rather than prosecute him for the violation of the Code of Military Justice, the CO sent O'Shea to Platte AFB to cool his heels in Nebraska. O'Shea didn't have to spend a day at Platte before he realized that this was not where he wanted to end up. Now he's desperate to be rotated out of Platte so he can get his career back on track, if he can.

O'Shea is a trim, wiry 25-year-old Caucasian male. He stands 5'8" and weighs 176 lbs. He has red hair, blue eyes and a freckled complexion. He is a plain-looking man who appears younger than his true age.

2nd Lt. Michael O'Shea: Male 1st level; HD 1d6; hp 6; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11; Atk +2 melee (1d3+1, punch) or +2 ranged (2d6, M-16); SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +3; Str 12, Dex 12, Con 11, Int 16, Wis 12, Cha 10.

Skills: Bluff +4, Craft (electronics) +6, Drive +8, Hide +5, Listen +5, Move Silently +5, Pilot (jet) +8, Pilot (prop) +5, Repair +5, Sense Motive +5, Spot +5, Swim +3.

Feats: Skill Emphasis (Drive), Skill Emphasis (Pilot [jet]), Weapon Proficiency (rifle).

Sanity: 60.

Technical Sgt. Robert Bach, Chief of Operations

Sgt. Bach is doing someone else's penance. Last year, while working for the Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI), his team was involved in a massive counter-intelligence failure. A laptop computer full of classified data was lost and (as far as Bach can tell) records were altered to make it look like he was the last person to use it. He was transferred out of OSI and dumped at Platte AFB to finish out his enlistment. He is bitterly disappointed that this has ruined his chances of doing work for any other government agency. Bach expects to just get through this year and start looking for work in the private sector.

Bach is a tall, well-built 32-year-old Caucasian male (6'4" and 230 lbs). Small patches of gray speckle his full head of brown hair. Despite his height, Bach has the sort of nondescript appearance common to counter-intelligence agents.

Technical Sgt. Robert Bach: Male 1st level; HD 1d6+2; hp 8; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 12; Atk +2 melee (1d3+1, punch) or +3 ranged (2d6, M-16); SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +5; Str 13, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 14, Wis 16, Cha 9.

Skills: Bluff +3, Craft (electronics) +4, Craft (photography) +4, Diplomacy +6, Drive +6, Hide +5, Knowledge (law) +4, Knowledge (medicine [forensics]) +6, Listen +6, Move Silently +6, Sense Motive +9, Spot +7.

Feats: Skill Emphasis (Diplomacy), Skill Emphasis (Sense Motive), Weapon Proficiency (rifle).

Sanity: 80.

Airman Brian Lundy, Groundskeeper

Airman Lundy is a screw-up with a long string of poor performance reviews dating back from basic training. The Air Force has wisely assigned him to the place he can do the least damage. Fortunately Lundy hasn't quite tumbled to the fact that Platte is a punishment detail. He still thinks he's being all he can be and is looking forward to putting the fact that he was "head groundskeeper" on his resume. He is often assigned to guard duty since he actually enjoys it and thinks it is a way to distinguish himself . . . not that he's really any good at it.

Lundy is a fresh-faced, good-looking 19-year-old Caucasian kid with not a lot going on upstairs. He stands 5'9" and weighs 170 lbs. He has blond hair and vapid blue eyes.

Airman Brian Lundy: Male 1st level; HD 1d6; hp 7; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 12; Atk +3 melee (1d3+2, punch; or 1d8+2, axe; or 2d8+2, chainsaw) or +3 ranged (2d6, M-16); SV Fort +3, Ref +2, Will -1; Str 14, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 13.

Skills: Climb +6, Drive +2, Hide +6, Jump +6, Listen +3, Move Silently +5, Repair +3, Search –1, Spot +3, Swim +3, Use Rope +2, Wilderness Lore -1.

Feats: WP (melee, rifle, thrown).

Equipment: Wood axe, chainsaw (in gardening shed).

Sanity: 40.

Airman Clark Smith, Aircraft Maintenance

Airman Smith joined the Air Force to escape the scrutiny of the local law enforcement in his hometown of Houston, Texas. Smith has a long juvenile record, including auto theft, vandalism, and even violent crime. Had the Air Force known, Smith would have been turned away by the recruiters, but the juvenile records were sealed. However, there were discipline problems at basic training and he was sent to Platte AFB on the theory that putting him out of the way was the best thing to do.

Airman Smith is a good-looking 19-year-old Caucasian man. He has a contemptuous air about him. He has blond hair and blue eyes. He stands 5'10" and weighs 173 lbs. He still sports garish tattoos from his days as a gang member.

Airman Clark Smith: Male 1st level; HD 1d6; hp 8; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +4 melee (1d3+2, punch) or +1 ranged (2d6, M-16); SV Fort +4, Ref +0, Will -2; Str 14, Dex 10, Con 15, Int 11, Wis 6, Cha 14.

Skills: Climb +2, Bluff +6, Climb +6, Drive (auto) +4, Drive (motorcycle) +4, Hide +4, Move Silently +4, Open Lock +4, Repair +4, Spot -2, Swim +2, Use Rope +0.

Feats: Weapon Focus (unarmed strike), Weapon Proficiency (melee, rifle).

Sanity: 30.

Airman Lynn Carter, Air Traffic Control

When Airman Carter refused to submit to her ROTC instructor's sexual advances, he ensured she flunked out and didn't receive her officer's commission. Even worse, she had to finish her service requirement as an enlisted person. When she took the Air Force and the ROTC program to court over this the suit failed spectacularly. She made a lot of enemies and was portrayed as a malcontent trying to use the courts to strike a blow for radical feminism. This punishment detail didn't surprise her. She is determined to get through this and leave the Air Force behind her.

Carter is a very attractive 23-year-old Caucasian woman who is unpretentious and natural in her demeanor. She stands 5'9" and weighs 138 lbs. She wears her shoulder-length brown hair pinned up when on duty, and wears glasses when she reads. She has blue eyes.

Airman Lynn Carter: Female 1st level; HD 1d6; hp 6; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11; Atk +1 melee (1d3, punch; or pepper spray, special) or +2 ranged (2d6, M-16); SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +3; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 16.

Skills: Computer Use +6, Diplomacy +7, Drive +5, Knowledge (electronics) +6, Knowledge (history) +5, Knowledge (law) +5, Listen +6, Repair +5, Research +6, Sense Motive +3, Spot +10, Swim +3.

Feats: Alertness, Skill Emphasis (Spot), Weapon Proficiency (rifle).

Equipment: Pepper spray, 5 shots (melee touch attack to use; victim must make a Fort save against DC 10 or be stunned for 2 rounds).

Sanity: 60.

Staff Sgt. Frank Long, Fire/Rescue and Medic

Staff Sgt. Long has a problem; a gambling problem. Gambling losses cost him his house and his marriage, and now his career. In order to pay off his debts, he hired his talents as a fire fighter out as an arsonist. He did these jobs off base to assist insurance defrauders to get past the arson investigators. He succeeded for months, but eventually the suspicions of arson investigators began to close in. He was transferred to Platte AFB when the military police failed to turn up any direct evidence, but the suspicions about his involvement were not dispelled. Now Long lives in perpetual fear that the insurance scammers he worked with will roll on him and rat him out to the authorities.

Staff Sgt. Long is a tall, muscular 33-year-old African-American man who stands 6'2" tall and weighs 176 lbs. Mild hazel eyes highlight a strongly featured, confident face. He keeps his head completely shaved.

Staff Sgt. Frank Long: Male 1st level; HD 1d6; hp 6; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +3 melee (1d3+2, punch) or +1 ranged (2d6, M-16); SV Fort +2, Ref +0, Will +1; Str 14, Dex 11, Con 11, Int 15, Wis 13, Cha 12.

Skills: Climb +6, Demolitions +3, Drive +4, Knowledge (chemistry) +6, Knowledge (medicine) +5, Knowledge (pharmacy) +5, Heal +8, Jump +6, Listen +5, Operate Heavy Machinery +2, Search +5, Spot +5.

Feats: Skill Emphasis (Heal), Weapon Proficiency (rifle, thrown weapons).

Sanity: 65.

Airman Randy Campbell, Fire/Rescue

Airman Campbell is an experienced, competent fire-fighter who can't stay out of trouble when he's not putting out fires. He was once Sgt. Campbell, but his insubordination cost him his rank. Now he's stuck at Platte AFB, waiting for his last year to run out so he can be discharged and go looking for work with a municipal fire department. He's also sensitive about his looks. This combined with his tendency to act before thinking can easily start a fight.

Airman Campbell is a fit, well-built, singularly unattractive 25-year-old Caucasian male. He stands 6'3" and weighs 194 lbs. His hair is brown, as are his eyes.

Airman Randy Campbell: Male 1st level; HD 1d6; hp 7; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +3 melee (1d3+2, punch) or +1 ranged (2d6, M-16); SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will -1; Str 15, Dex 11, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 7.

Skills: Climb +6, Drive +4, Heal +6, Jump +6, Listen +5, Operate Heavy Machinery +2, Repair +2, Spot +5, Swim +2, Tumble +4, Use Rope +0, Wilderness Lore -1.

Feats: Alertness, Skill Emphasis (Heal), Weapon Proficiency (melee, rifle).

Sanity: 30.

Airman Laura Dunsany, Administrative Assistant

Airman Dunsany suffers from what could be charitably called "personality deficit disorder." In other words, she is a jerk. She has an uncanny ability to rub everyone she encounters the wrong way. This had led to a long series of poor performance reviews, a lack of promotions and transfers in which various commanders have attempted to make her someone else's problem. She thinks she knows more than everyone around her. While she is competent at her job, she is also so arrogant that it inevitably leads to alienating her co-workers.

Dunsany is a dark-eyed, dark-skinned 20-year-old African-American woman with extremely short, black hair. Her face wears a perpetual sour scowl. She stands 5'5" and weighs 130 lbs.

Airman Laura Dunsany: Female 1st level; HD 1d6; hp 7; Init -1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 9; Atk +0 melee (1d3-1, punch) or +0 ranged (2d6, M-16); SV Fort +1, Ref -1, Will +6; Str 9, Dex 9, Con 13, Int 13, Wis 18, Cha 8.

Skills: Appraise +2, Climb +3, Computer Use +5, Drive +3, Diplomacy +1, Jump +3, Knowledge (accounting) +5, Knowledge (law) +2, Listen +8, Research +1, Spot +8, Tumble +3.

Feats: Dodge, Martial Arts, Weapon Proficiency (rifle).

Sanity: 90.

Airman Tommy Ligotti, Motorpool Maintenance

Things go missing around Airman Ligotti. Aircraft components, liquor from the officer's club, weapons from the arsenal, vehicles from the motorpool—nothing is immune when Ligotti is on base. Ligotti is just doing the same job he used to do when he was working for a Mob-connected crew back in New Jersey. While he has been slippery enough to avoid getting caught, he has not avoided the attention of the military police. The provost marshal at the last airbase he served on made sure that Ligotti was transferred someplace where there was nothing worth stealing. Still, Ligotti is sure that the things he learned stealing from the Air Force will help him maintain a long career stealing from Uncle Sam.

Ligotti is a short, thick 24-year-old Caucasian male, standing 5'7" and weighing 169 pounds. He has thick, black hair, dark eyes, bushy brows, and a pockmarked face. He smokes as much as he can get away with.

Airman Tommy Ligotti: Male 1st level; HD 1d6; hp 6; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 12; Atk +2 melee (1d3+1, punch) or +3 ranged (2d6, M-16); SV Fort +0, Ref +4, Will 0; Str 12, Dex 15, Con 11, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 9.

Skills: Bluff +3, Climb +5, Hide +6, Jump +4, Listen +4, Move Silently +6, Open Lock +5, Repair +4, Sense Motive +2, Sleight of Hand +4, Spot +4, Search +6.

Feats: Martial Artist, Weapon Proficiency (pistol, rifle).

Sanity: 50.

Cpl. Ted Klien, Aircraft Maintenance

Cpl. Ted Klien once bragged he could get any woman he wanted. When he found out there was a betting pool worth $3,400 for the man who could bring back proof that he had seduced the base commander's daughter, Klien accepted the challenge. The good news is Klien brought back proof—a videotape. The bad news is that videotapes tend to get copied and passed around. While this isn't exactly a violation of the Uniform Code of Military Justice, it is a career ender when it gets back to the girl's father. The general made sure Klien would have lots of time without distractions at Platte AFB to contemplate the error of his ways. Klien has done so and has decided that as soon as he's out of the Air Force he's going to try modeling or maybe acting.

Ted Klien is a little too good looking to be believed. The 21-year-old Caucasian male stands 5'9" and weighs 168 pounds, with black hair and pale blue eyes. He is all white teeth and dimples and fetching, soulful eyes. Like most folks with an honest face, he isn't.

Cpl. Ted Klien: Male 1st level; HD 1d6; hp 6; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 11; Atk +2 melee (1d3+1, punch) or +2 ranged (2d6, M-16); SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will -1; Str 13, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 9, Cha 18.

Skills: Bluff +11, Climb +5, Diplomacy +8, Craft (electronics) +5, Drive +1, Gather Information +6, Intimidate +6, Listen +2, Operate Heavy Machinery +5, Repair +5, Sense Motive +3, Spot +3.

Feats: Skill Emphasis (Bluff), Trustworthy, Weapon Proficiency (rifle),.

Sanity: 45.

Cpl. Bob Price, Base Security

Airman Price was an Air Force MP, a member of the Security Police. He transferred to Platte because he brutally beat an Air Force colonel during an arrest. The reason he received a transfer rather than a general court-marshal was that the colonel had been in the process of beating up his wife. Price was the first officer on the scene and he couldn't resist giving the colonel a taste of his own medicine. The provost marshal suspected that the colonel didn't resist arrest as much as Price suggested, but the colonel's wife backed up Price's version of events. Price knows he narrowly escaped serious disciplinary action and hopes he can get out of Platte soon and get his career back on track.

Cpl. Price is a strongly built, well-muscled 23-year-old Caucasian male. He stands 6'1" and weighs 223 lbs. His hair is brown, his eyes hazel. His prominent chin dominates his profile. His eyes are narrow slits.

Cpl. Bob Price: Male 1st level; HD 1d6; hp 7; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk +4 melee (1d3+3, punch) or +1 ranged (2d6, M-16); SV Fort +3, Ref +0, Will +1; Str 17, Dex 10, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 10.

Skills: Climb +7, Diplomacy +4, Drive +4, Heal +5, Hide +1, Jump +3, Knowledge (law) +5, Listen +5, Move Silently +4, Spot +5, Tumble +1, Wilderness Lore +3.

Feats: Track, Weapon Proficiency (pistol, rifle).

Sanity: 65.

Weapons Quick Reference

Improvised Weapons	Dmg.	Crit.	Range Inc.	Weight	Type
Chainsaw	3d6	x2	—	10 lbs.	Slashing
Fire axe	1d8	x3	—	6 lbs.	Slashing
Gas-powered edger	2d6	x2	—	20 lbs.	Slashing
Improvised club*	1d6	x2	—	varies	Bludgeoning
Letter opener	1d3	x2	—	.5 lb.	Piercing
Machete	1d6	19-20/x2	—		Slashing
Oxy-acetylene welder	2d8	x2	touch	50 lbs.	Fire**
Pruning shears	1d3	x2	—	1 lb.	Piercing
Shovel	1d6	x2	—	4 lbs.	Bludgeoning

* Tire iron, chair leg, lead pipe, wrench, etc.

** The welder's tank has a hardness of 5 and 5 hit points. A tank reduced to 0 hit points ruptures and explodes, dealing 6d6 points of damage to the wielder and 3d6 points of splash damage to anyone within a 5-foot radius (Reflex save, DC 15, for half damage). The wielder can "fire" the welder 10 times before it runs out of gas. Hitting with the welder requires only a touch attack.

Firearms	Dmg.	Crit.	Action	Cap.	Loading	Range	Rate
M16A2 5.56x45mm	2d6	x3	select	20 or 30	mag	200 ft.	Autofire
Baretta M92	1d10	x3	semi/D	15	mag	20 ft.	Multifire
SOCCOM .45	2d8	x3	semi/D	10	mag	20 ft.	Multifire
20mm Chain Gun	3d12	x5	auto†	1000	mag.	600 ft.	Autofire

Fragmentation weapons	Dmg.	Blast Radius	Action	Cap.	Loading	Range	Rate
M203 Grenade Launcher	3d6	20 ft.	semi	1	breach	200 ft.	Standard
20mm Chain Gun	3d6	10 ft.	auto†	1000	mag.	600 ft.	Autofire
Molotov cocktail	1d6	5 ft.	N/A	1	N/A	10 ft.	Standard

† Due to the stability and high-tech targeting system of the mounted chain gun, there are no penalties for autofire. Only hits that are +5 over the required to-hit roll result in a direct hit by the chain gun. All other "hits" use fragmentation damage.

Did I tell you about Vogel yet? No? The guy was amazing. He'd charge into combat with a target painted onto his helmet, daring the Germans to shoot him, and did they ever! You've seen that famous photo of him charging across that bridge in Copehagen right? The one where the other Danish resistance members are getting mowed down? I took that photo. Jan lived for moments like that. He lived to take the fight to the Germans...

What did I live for? I lived to go home. I was indestructible but I wasn't stupid. I knew everyone's luck ran out some time. Jan never got it. He never saw the end coming. Turns out he didn't have to, the end found him just fine.

GODLIKE

There Were Giants in Those Days Part Five: Vogel, the Bird

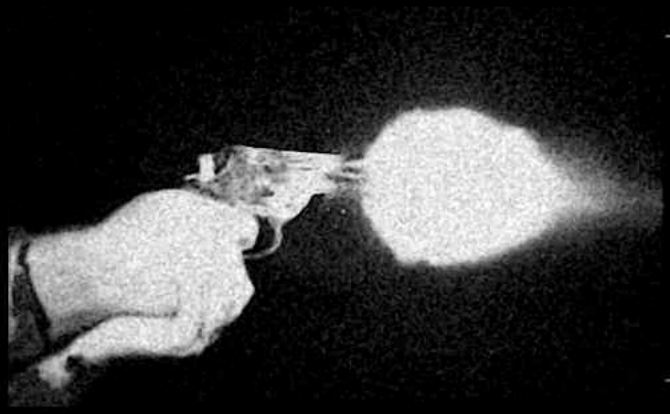
By Dennis Detwiller

For Jan, it all began in the spring of 1940, when the Nazis rolled into Denmark. He was a 20 year old layabout who had no idea of what or who he should be, until the tanks crossed the border.
Within two days, overwhelmed, the government of Denmark capitulated. As "Aryans" they would be well treated as subjects of Hitler's Reich. No one had any idea of the depth of their situation.

Those that did carried on the fight. The underground sprung up, nearly overnight, to smuggle weapons, equipment and British agents into the country. Jan joined them without a second thought...

He was caught by the Gestapo just days after the invasion, smuggling weapons...

The punishment was execution by firing squad. On April 11, 1940 Jan Dinesen readied himself for death, instead, he found a new life...



When the German rifles failed to kill the youth, somehow missing him at less than twenty paces, an impatient officer stepped up to dispatch Jan with his pistol at point blank range.
He, too, missed.
Jan walked away from the firing squad, as they fired round after round, trying in vain to hit him. In an instant, his Talent had manifested.
No bullet could hit him.

He fled the city and started a new organized resistance. They terrorized the German occupation troops...

and made it all but impossible for the Nazis to rule the "conquered" territory.

The British, of course, were ecstatic. They shipped him guns, equipment and material to carry on the fight. The Germans began to call him "Der Vogel", "The Bird", and as his legend grew, so did his influence.
By the time we Americans showed up, he had Jerry on the run...

We fought together in Denmark, France, Belgium and Germany. We killed krauts and superkrauts alike. He was a good guy. Someone who felt good watching your back. Someone you could trust.
He also loved America, which didn't hurt. In fact, with some finagling, we got him a Visa to come on over after the war. At the time, it didn't seem like it would ever end.

But it did, just like everything else. One summer day the news came back, we wouldn't be going to the Pacific after all. It was over. That was it. Jan, me and Pevnost got rip roaring drunk in Paris and did some damage.
It was damn near the best day of my life...

Jan turned up in Hollywood six months later, to make some films. Two months after that, they were pulling his body from a mangled wreck on Cahuenga Boulevard

It's like that, the end. It sneaks up on you just when you think you sidestepped it. It' ll find me too, I have no doubt, indestructible or not. Until then, how about another story?

Next: Der Flieger, the First of His Kind...